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April 2003 | Volume 6 Issue 1 SA Edition

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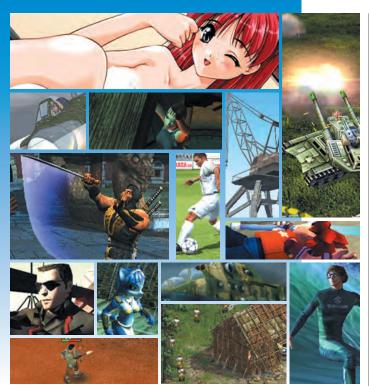
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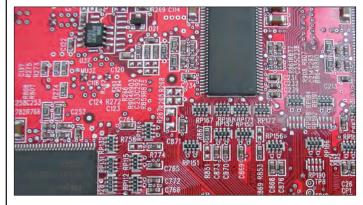
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This month's cover: Unreal II - visit page 52 for details.







APRIL NAG COVER CD

DEMOS

Freelancer 147 MB Jurassic Park Project Genesis 78.6 MB

MOVIES

Enter the Matrix 5.4 MB
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World of WarCraft 23.1 MB

PATCHES

Age of Mythology v1.04 Patch7.2 MBGrom v1.3 Patch (European)1.5 MBNeverwinter Nights v1.28 patch15.6 MBSplinter Cell v1.1 Patch (European)6.5 MB

MODIFICATIONS - ADD ONS

Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness Screensaver 2.8 MB

UTILITIES

 3DMark 2003
 177 MB

 Empty Folder
 0.1 MB

 Foobar
 0.7 MB

 Ifranview
 0.8 MB

 Slim Browser
 0.7 MB

CHEATS

Cheatbook Database 2002 v2.0 5 MB August Update 1 MB September Update 1 MB October Update 1 MB November Update 1 MB 1 MB December Update January Update 1 MB February Update 1 MB 1 MB March Update

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We would like to thank the following companies for making the NAG Cover CD possible...



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Just a quick announcement, from this issue onwards NAG Magazine will be available at all Pick 'n Pay stores. We've also increased our overall print run to meet the demand in some areas. What this means to you is that you should have no more trouble finding the magazine. We're growing and improving each month and soon we'll be so big headed we won't answer our letters anymore.

There is a point to what follows a little further on, so bear with me while I bear my soul.

Last year sometime I made a foolish bet with a buddy of mine that I could reach a set body weight in six months, too much male posturing and alcohol being the major contributors. The bet was, I must lose 15 kilograms by December and win R500. Simple enough - December came and went and I'd actually managed to go up in kilograms - those damn Wimpy breakfasts! So the bet was extended to May the next year for R 1000 [plus endless ridicule from said friend]. It's now March, I've started running and at the current loss of weight I should come in close to the target. But all this is beside the point, it's just scene setting for the next paragraph.

The point here is that I went out and bought a running magazine, because I'm clueless about my new sport. I'd surfed countless websites but the sheer amount of information there actually makes it difficult to find anything useful. Paging through the magazine however helped me immensely, the adverts were useful, the articles helpful and although not all of them were on target for my interests I've now bought a new pair of shoes and know how to avoid some of the more serious nijuries - you have to stretch before running - very important if you want to avoid a groin injury that'll have you wincing each time you climb out of your car, or even your bed for that matter. The reason for the previous 250 words odd is that I always used to wonder why people would buy a gaming magazine when the Internet usually has everything you need in a quicker, faster and more elaborate format because there really isn't

anything you can't find on the Internet. Reading the running magazine however highlighted how important it is to have your information all in one place, all the Internet sites in the world simply cannot compete with one single complete body of information in a portable format. Clearly highlighting that sometimes less is definitely more. Which reminds me - we have a survey insert in this issue to find out what it is you really want to see in NAG, so fill it in and send it back to us - you may win a decent prize for your effort.

Magazine pirates...

Someone asked me a question the other day which will make for some interesting feedback in the letters section. If you're reading the text in this magazine and you didn't pay for it does that make you a magazine pirate? If it's good enough to read it's good enough to buy. **Comments to:** letters@nag.co.za.

Hanny day

I've left this at the end because I'm not sure if it's relevant to anyone reading the magazine but anyway this is our 6th year in the gaming magazine business. It's our birthday issue - blah etc. it's not that much of a big deal until you consider that the first ever issue of NAG featured a preview of an unknown game called Unreal, the original [interesting quote from the preview, 'Ion Storm was so impressed with the Unreal engine that they recently licensed it for Daikatana II.'] The issue cost R 11.95 and didn't have a cover CD. In that issue there were reports of a Tomb Raider movie and we had a Voodoo 2 graphics card from Creative Labs to play with, and the bad news was you needed at least a Pentium 166MHz to run it. Expensive memories, well in 2003 nothing much has changed, the price has gone up a little - if I was a mathematician I could tell you by how many percentiles my best guess would have to be 192.9% - hang on perhaps revealing this isn't such a good

Well enjoy this issue, when we get to 10 years we'll throw a party and invite everyone we know.

Michael James Editor

Winners

Vietcong Game Mark Holder Lawrence Meyer

Hein Caccia

IGI 2 Covert Strike Game Francois van Loggerenberg Jason Myburgh Mornè Amos

Next Month

The May issue will feature, among other things, a review on Splinter Cell, Freelancer and TOCA Race Driver... we'll also have a first look at Fable, Red Faction 2 and a host of other previews... our hardware round-up will focus on soundcards and a close-up picture of someone's left ear. We'll also be announcing the biggest gaming event in South Africa... ever! Do whatever you must but make sure you don't miss NAG next month.

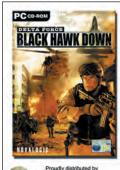
The May issue will be on sale 1 May 2003

Competition

The people at MegaRom are giving away 3 copies of the game **Delta**Force: Blackhawk Down including a T-shirt and Cap. What you

have to do - before the end of **May 2003** is send us a picture of your best attempt at camouflaging yourself or your mates. We'll publish the best pictures for everyone to laugh at. **Note:** if your camouflaging skills are so good that we can't spot you in the picture you can't win.

Entries to: ed@nag.co.za Subject: peekaboo Closes: 31 May 2003





Bee fun knee

Each month we'll select a screenshot from one of the games in the issue and write a funny caption for it, well... we'll try and make it funny...

Your job is to see if you can come up with an even funnier caption and send it to: ed@nag.co.za
Subject: April Caption.

If you use the wrong subject in your e-mail it'll get deleted...

Your prize: There is no prize... however if there is something lying around at the office that we don't need or like we'll send it to you... this will keep happening until someone out there decides to sponsor a prize.





▲ `Fred lights a fart in the cockpit' - nag's best effort

february winner



▲ `The latest Steven seagull movie.' - Rohin Gosling

nag magazine

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lEttEr of

thE momEnt

Well done to the letter of the month winner - your Electronic Arts game and T-shirt will arrive shortly.



To polish or not to polish

You know, every time I read about a game's release date being pushed back it's always because " ... we're just adding polish to the game..." I wonder, how much of this "polish" the gaming industry goes through? I'll tell you that most games sure go through a lot of it! I think if I could find the source of travelling up your mouse ball, and thus this mysterious polish and sell it to the gaming to the rollers. But seriously people, industry then not only would the games be released instead of obsessing over the origins of on time, but I would make a fortune doing it! Why the mystical mouse dirt, just clean it don't they just say, "... sorry we all went on leave with an ear bud. over Christmas and didn't recover from our Sakibono hangovers after New Year on schedule. You'll have to wait another 3 months and then we'll just tell you, Ed: I have no idea why I'm editing a again, that we are adding more polish!"

MaVeRiCk

Ed: I can think of a number of games that have used too much of this polish, but the problem seems to be that there are different types of polish. There's the kind that you can rub on all day and still never get a shine and then there's the type that makes a game shine by just being in the same room and takes half
The Domain of The_Basilisk the time - explain that one.

shorts

First impressions of a visit to the NAG office

I sat down and booted up. The whirr of the fan always seemed comforting. Reloading, a man jogging down a road towards me came into view. He opened a large white gate and beckoned me through it (I imagine there were many sparkly lights.) I followed him down a twisting path through a white gate. He Prodigious introduced himself to me as the editor of NAG. I entered the sanctity of this place, and I did behold a most beauteous sight. Rows upon rows of games, reason why we even publish that fast computers, a large TV, thousands of boxes of cat column every month - it causes too food... I was in heaven.

Andrew 'Corpsious' Backhouse **British International College**

Ed: We sometimes host students at the office...

Remember the days when computers took up entire rooms? Fans back then were probably huge and noisy, like air conditioning units. So what we can deduce is that the speed of the computer doesn't always denote the size of the fan.

Unknown

Ed: Fascinating

No subject

Being one of the three people that actually reads the Editor's Note, I noticed that you said you wanted to finish Dungeon Siege. What the hell is wrong with you? What is someone with such an obvious lack of taste in games doing editing a gaming magazine? And what is this obsession with the naming of DOOM III? I mean, III is the Roman numeral for 3. So if you call it Doom 3, or Doom three, or if you have a slight speech impediment, Doom free, what difference does it make? I've also noticed mouse dirt is a popular topic. So for all you dyslexic crack addict monkeys with no clue, it comes from the sweat of your hand, which is transferred via osmosis to your mouse pad, picking up dirt along the way,

gaming magazine - clearly I have no place being here. The reason you write DOOM III like this: DOOM III is because that's the right way to write it. Thanks for the help on the mouse dirt, where would we be without you...

How do your "researchers" (in the January 2003 Edition Page 10) get ninety-two simultaneous orgasms by buying a magazine every month, because it is impossible to actually like reading "The Domain of The Basilisk". Where do you get these "researchers" and will they be willing to teach me a thing or two?

Ed: I honestly can't think of a single much trouble. Regarding the 92 big ones - I heard the researchers went away for a 'fun' weekend to a pig farm with a number of brown paper bags.

The Barber Shop Game

I had an idea for a game for the movie "The Barber Shop". There would be a special controller, a hair shaver which you would use to shave heads. People will pay you at the end of their haircut for how much they think the hair cut is worth. There will be different hair cuts to master, time limits to complete hair

cuts in and you have to focus on cutting the depth of the hair by using the different clippers. Apart from that you will also have to comb people's hair or use hair products to enhance the hair. At the beginning of the game you can play around but as you continue, it gets tougher (career mode). There will also be a challenge mode where you play against your friend. It would be a fun and educational experience which will help you later in life when you have to cut people's hair and you could start a business with your skills.

Jeansy

Ed: What worries me is the amount of detailed thought you've put into your concept. I do like the idea but I worry about the multiplayer aspect of the

Anime and me

I have always been fascinated by anime. I learnt many things from it like the fact that smart people wear glasses, and the fact that when you die make a long speech and don't finish the last sentence, the fact also remains that anime bad guys have slow and painful cool deaths while good guys die quickly or not so quickly. Anime has taught me that hair is virtually indestructible and can withstand any conditions and whenever I'm in a fight and losing, all I do is scream and power up until the person runs away since I know he'll be too dazed to do anything about it. From anime I learnt that I must scream out a name of an attack before using it. Kind of like, "Read NAG!" Anime has taught me how to live life. It is now my life. I want to thank you guys at NAG for putting the anime article in your magazine. Please add anime drawing tutorials since I want to improve my drawing skills. Then maybe we can send our anime pictures to NAG.

Ed: It's a pleasure - we've been getting some good feedback on the Anime section so it'll stay.

On a current thread on the Prophecy general forums (Once Again... Piracy), an article was posted about the threat of certain DVD and Game producers pulling their products out of South Africa permanently and labelling us an "All piracy state". This would be absolutely catastrophic and cause the cost of obtaining certain items here to

skyrocket. The general feel in the thread is one of helplessness, which is a pity, surely there is someone that could be contacted regarding this, or we could start up a discussion amongst the gaming community to help the official attempt to stamp out piracy? We (the gaming community) are the people that would be most hard hit by a change like this and we are also the people who have the best idea of what is happening (as opposed to the less-literate consumer that thinks a DVD is a DVD, no matter the cost or packaging), so we have a responsibility to get involved and help out. I'm not writing this to get a letter in the Magazine, but rather to suggest that NAG run an insert on how people can report cases of piracy, and also to ask if you, as the voice of gamers in South Africa, would be able to help us get more involved. Some initial suggestions have already been raised in the abovementioned thread, and I think if the community worked at it, we could make a difference. There is no reason for helplessness and inactivity in this issue!

Ed: I like your thinking - I've put this in the issue planning and we'll take a serious look in a future issue of NAG.

Time is money

Time! Time is something that none of us can ever accumulate and yet it is one of the most important assets we can invest in. When you look at the best gamers out there they have dedicated their lives and time to becoming the best they can be. What I would like to know is: How do they do it!? I love gaming and I would love to be able to compete nationally and internationally, I realise that it takes a lot of practice, but I just do not have the time. I'm in grade 12 and I'm working my butt off to get the best certificate I can. I want to study at university for the next few vears as well. When is it too late to start and how do you get enough real (man versus man) practice to get to the right level. I don't see a solution. Can someone please show me the light?

Shadowfax

Ed: My advice - blow off the education and play the games... look how it worked for me! Just kidding! If anyone out there has any advice, send a mail.

Free

I'm a fan of your magazine, but very

poor. The only two editions I bought I now still read. I usually use my money to upgrade my PC and then don't have any money left for your magazine. So I want to ask you if you would mail me a free magazine. Please reply on this letter and then I will give you my address.

Guts

Ed: I'd really love to help you. But... instead of just sitting on your zero getting free magazines why don't you rather upgrade your mind and take out a subscription to the magazine. This way you'll avoid wasting money on upgrades you don't need or overpriced components from shady dealers. What did you think of my blatant and obvious ploy to flog another subscription to a starving 'bread-line' reader? Of course we'll send him a free magazine.

Scratched CD

Scratched CDs are a real problem let's face it, even the most careful person could end up with a scratch on their disk, ruining their game. A good example is Final Fantasy VIII Disk 1. The introduction was so compressed and stuffed with so much data if it froze you couldn't play the game since the introduction cannot be skipped. Don't you think CD manufacturers could help us gamers out and develop some sort of scratch protection? It would help many people come out of depression.

Schizo PuPu

Ed: Manufactured CD's have come a long way since they first arrived on the scene and there is already technology such as a scratch resistant and protective layer on your average CD. This problem will always be with us so I guess being more careful is the only solution until we're all using those new titanium data cubes.

Cover CD

I am really glad that the cover CD was brought back. One thing that bugs me though, is the new covers. The CD always gets stuck on that sticky flap Leigh was so impressed with Lord of the Rings he decided to theme his picture with a very painful looking tattoo.



and I fear it might damage the CD. Isn't there another way you could package your CD's? Maybe you could use cardboard or, if you prefer using plastic, you could use a clip or something to close the covers with.

Damian

Ed: The reason we use those particular sleeves is that we accidentally ordered 100 million of them thanks to a stupid clerical error made by the accounting department. So once we've used them all up [March 2013] we'll go back to cardboard.

Several Viewpoints

Alright! What the hell, the dust on the mouse pad is skin? Maybe - but all that dirt that appears on the mouse itself is definitely not skin, because I do not lose that much skin in the two hours that I usually play. What's happening with games these days? Some need speeds higher than 1.0 GHz. I'm only upgrading to 1.8 GHz so the developers had better watch it. Otherwise they will fall into the torture chambers of the Raven (and tell that R.A.V.E.N. dude to stop stealing names!)

Raven

Ed: I'm collecting mouse fluff from everyone I know and once I have a tennis ball sized chunk of it I'm going to send it to a lab for analysis. I'll publish the results in a few months.

To the rescue

Regarding the letter from the reader in the January issue who's CD-ROM doesn't work, I may have a solution to his/her/its problem. It might be that you installed/downloaded faulty drivers for your CD-ROM or they have been corrupted somehow. To determine whether it's a driver related problem, try booting up

with a start-up disk. Try accessing your CD-ROM drive in DOS. If you can do this, then its a driver related problem (if you can't, then I have to agree with Ed, there's something wrong with your CD-ROM drive, try checking the IDE cables and the power cables, err... I don't know... whatever). Boot in safe mode, remove the faulty drivers and then remove your CD-ROM drive using device manager. When you reboot, Windows will detect your CD-ROM and install fresh new drivers for your CD-ROM. Damn I'm so good... You don't have to thank me... I'm just doing my job. Keep up the good work NAG!

therealpaperguy

Ed: Thanks, I guess this is a little more helpful than my response would have been.

Introduction

What I just want to know is why are the graphics of the introduction of a game not as good as the playing graphics? I mean you buy this game and the introductory graphics look really great and you think, boy this game has great graphics, and then when you're in the game the graphics don't look nearly half as great as the movie. I have witnessed this before. Why can they not make games so that the graphics are alike?

Not stated

Ed: This is an easy one to answer. The introductory video graphics are displayed along the event horizon of a duplex alpha curve using a segmented polygonal shade algorithm. The graphics in the game use a different set of switch threads [special

graphical chips]. This is why the screen usually flickers when you go from movies to the game.

Anime

Your anime page is not really relative to gaming but if you must have it, include more guys with big swords and weapons instead of the little girls rubbish.

Tommyknocker

Ed: The Anime section's relativity to gaming depends on your perspective.

more shorts...

Hotdog Dance

I was reading the January NAG and I was wondering if you could explain what the Hotdog dance is.

David Brent

Ed: You cannot be told what the Hotdog dance is... you have to see it for yourself.

Cartoon

What's with your January comic?

Unknown

Ed: I have no idea... I was told it's funny in the kind of tone that you can't argue with for fear of looking stupid.

Jokes

I decided to send you these 2 gaming jokes.

Q. What is the perfect, flat screen lag free monitor?

A. A mirror.

Q. When will Microsoft develop a product which won't suck?

A. When they make a vacuum cleaner.

Raedon

Ed: I'm going to have to wait until someone else laughs first here... anyone, hello?

Idea

I was reading your magazine the other day and saw the "award of excellence" in one of your reviews. How about giving out awards of challenge? I don't know about you, but I enjoy a challenging game more than something I can clock in 3 days. So, those games that are real challenging should get an award like that.

Pieter

Ed: Interesting idea - I'm starting to think we should award games differently these days using categories like essence, challenge, intrigue and so on. It might help the game developers understand what we're really after.

Letter of the month

Can I have letter of the month? Please? :) thereal laracroft2

Ed: No, but I liked the simple straightforward approach here, it shows originality but at the same time contempt for forces greater than you.

f you're reading this block of information you're one of those rare and precious readers that read the magazine from cover to cover. The reason that we put this nonsense in these little blocks is to get more people like you reading these small boxes. So far it seems as if you're the only person who actually reads this stuff. This now brings us to interesting and tricky territory, should we continue for just one person or give it up and print a proper magazine?

Remember: letters are clicked on at least once before deletion.

Important: Include all your details when mailing us or you won't
get a prize if your letter is chosen as random winner of
the month

Send all topical and otherwise interesting items to the following: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158 (if you must use ink, paper, an envelope and stamps please include an electronic copy for easy processing]: on Real mall to: letters@nag.co.za...

There is a new rule for those of you sending in any artwork for publication - your submission must include the NAG logo or one of our magazine covers [download @ www.prophecy.co.za] built into the image somewhere - and by 'built in' we mean not pasted or stuck on somewhere - built in - you real artists will know what we're talking about - no logo / cover - no fame. NAG logo on CD.

THE DOMAIN OF THE BASILISK

WILL MAKE YOU MORE ATTRACTIVE TO THE OPPOSITE SEX.

Whatever situation the gaming community finds itself in, there never seems to be a shortage of tournaments and gaming events. Already this year, Gamers Gate, K-Sports and G8Keeper have some rather ambitious plans in the works (details in the Community.za section of this magazine). However, as we have seen countless times in the past, whatever the event organisers promise us, the event itself usually falls far short of our expectations. Despondency sets in and support dwindles. There have been many times, as a result of this, where some feared gaming would become a dying sport. Being in my position, I get to hear both sides of the story (we all know how gamers love to moan). The woes of players and organisers alike are usually expressed ardently afterwards, but true constructive criticism is scarce, and it's even rarer that anyone takes any real notice of the few valid points that are inevitably raised. Now, I am by no means trying to discourage the South African tournament organisers. In fact, I am eternally thankful that they are such a stubborn and determined bunch, otherwise we'd have no events at all. What I am saying, though, is that a number of issues, especially the simple principles of business, seem to be neglected over and over again.

here is no reason why gaming events cannot be highly successful and even (heaven forbid) profitable, but every event I attend seems to follow the same pattern. The quote, "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat its mistakes," has seldom been so applicable. I would like to illuminate a few of the common errors I've come across at previous events (and perhaps fear from upcoming ones), in the hopes that they can be avoided this time round. Of course, not all of the problems have immediate, easy

solutions - any undertaking of this scale will come with a few serious strings attached - but for the most part, the hiccups can be overcome with only marginal extra effort.

Money and Gaming (in the same sentence?)

The first and most important point to be raised, the core of the technical issues, the key to everything else, is proper preparation. One would think this surely goes without saying, but unfortunately it hasn't always been the case. Generally speaking, organisers seem to believe they can circumvent the problems by treating them as if they aren't there. While this may work for toddlers, spouses and mothers-in-law, it does not work quite so well with schedules, networking and electricity. There has not been a single event in the past two and a half years that ran on time. If an event is supposed to start at eight, you can be fairly certain that if you arrive at eleven-thirty, you will not have missed any of your matches. There is no excuse for delays as frequent as these. If something goes wrong, it's mostly due to poor preparation. Either it's a power trip, or a fault on the network, or a mix-up with the tournament roster. An act of God could possibly interfere with proceedings, but I have so far not experienced

If the power dies, there should be a technician, or team of technicians, on standby. There should be backup power, and all the wiring and equipment should be tested beforehand. Besides, the venue should be able to meet its power requirements in the first place. If the network goes down, the

problem should be identified and sorted out within minutes. There should be no complications arising from a convoluted setup in the beginning. (A perfect network is very possible - Vapour and the Mayhem crew have done it on numerous occasions). The words, "we are waiting for someone to arrive," should never be uttered. All possible contingencies should be planned for. The servers should be certifiably stable and not overloaded - testing is again the key word. And there is simply nothing forgivable about confusion in the tournament structure (who plays who at what time on what server). These issues need to be sorted out weeks before, not at the last minute.

The concept of preparation also extends to having the necessary staff to cope with the demands of the competition. Without a single exception, every event in South Africa has been understaffed. There are never enough referees to oversee all of the matches. If a player has a query, he/she will usually have to wait because their admin is sorting out some other problem. I have never seen a tournament where the organisers aren't rushing off their feet. This causes yet more frustrating delays. I understand things are probably running on a tight budget, but if these events are going to be done at all, they

should be done properly, and distributing the workload is one of those crucial things. Once the tournament is running smoothly, we can start to consider the more advanced areas. In the past, there have been several instances of sponsors pulling out of events, or failing to deliver on their side of agreements. Prizes have been cut down, promises have been broken. This brings me to the corporate aspect of gaming events. I think often the problem is that they are run by gamers and not businessmen. There is a massive difference between those there for the hell of it, and those doing it for

the money. Currently, there seem to be none of the latter. Thinking of an event as "community work" and not as a business venture is what makes it all go horribly wrong. One of the fundamentals of sponsorship is a written contract that protects both parties from the other pulling out at the last minute. If these agreements were securely made, we would not have the problem of a sponsor deciding not to deliver. And, going one step further, if the sponsors

were confident they had something to gain, we would not be needing legal documents to get them to pay up. They need to believe in the ability of the organisers. And quite honestly, my friends, there is zero professionalism in South African gaming events.

Instilling confidence in sponsors is all about presentation. The happy-go-lucky attitude taken by most organisers, while creating a friendly, relaxed atmosphere amongst the players, will not go down well with the men in suits and ties. Companies are always overly cautious when spending their money on someone else's project. Unprofessional websites and colloquial press releases just project an amateur image. Perhaps a person with the required business skills and experience should be taking over at a management level. I'm not suggesting that the tournament itself be run by people with no knowledge of gaming, but rather the financial and public relations side of things. The idea is to assemble a team whose diversity prepares them for any situation. Right now, experience in certain sectors is lacking. Areas such as advertising (I cannot stress this enough) and media coverage have been dismal. Gaming is still, for the most part, "underground", and this is not an enticing prospect for sponsors.

SERVE BANK

LEST PROPERTY

LEST PROP

Finally, we move to the all-important topic of spectators. If the only people at the event are the players, sponsors will not be receiving the exposure they would like. As with any "sport", it's the people watching that give them their money's worth. Since gaming is a relatively new thing, the event will have to do the work to bring spectators in, not just sit back and expect them to come knocking of their own accord. Again, this ties in with advertising. It means that a definite focus needs to be placed on those who are not participating. An efficient, clear and easily-accessible spectator area is essential, keeping in mind that many of the visitors will have no idea how the games work. Perhaps a commentator or guide could keep them informed, and explain the basic format, who is winning, and what is at stake. People want to sit back and be entertained. The initial efforts to inform and "educate" non-gamers must be made. The Worfaire events of 1999 and 2000 were the closest we have come to this ideal. I pray that in the future, hopefully the near future, that abandoned trend will continue and a more professional approach will be adopted. I suggest we all take a renewed look at how organisation is handled in the mainstream sports. They must be doing something right if half the country is watching.



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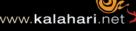
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BUILDING BETTER CHARACTERS

One of the things that makes role playing so much fun is the interaction between the characters within the game. But flat characters make for poor gaming, because the player has nothing to draw on for this inspiration. If your character is nothing more than a bunch of numbers on a photocopied character sheet, there really isn't much to work with. However, there are some ways to inject "life" into those statistics...

No matter which way you create your character (whether randomly or carefully constructed) these following methods will help add life and believability to even the weirdest characters. And that is rather important, because role playing is as much about representing a character as it is journeying through the world that your GM creates.

Be warned, though. These techniques will take some of your time. However, if you want a well rounded and enjoyable character, then you should undertake these exercises - they are well worth it. The first thing to do is to get a book or folder for your character. A typical soft cover school-style jotter is perfect for the job. This will be your character book, and will contain all the notes pertaining to your character in it. In fact, you will probably want to paste your character sheet into this book - never a bad idea. Avoid making game notes or doodling in this book - it must be dedicated to your character. That way, you will always be able to keep track of the character.

Right, so you have created your character, and pasted the sheet in your character book. But how do you make it a believable "person?"

Basically, this process is made up of writing several "essays" about your character. Yes, it sounds like hard work, and it is time consuming, but the result will be a well rounded character, plus an indication of your dedication to the game that will impress other players and the GM alike. And, let's face it, character consistency is very important. However, if you don't want to write essays, point form lists will probably suffice.

Once you are ready to write, do the following exercises in order:

What does your character look like? Be as descriptive as possible, and avoid any descriptions of clothing, habits or any of those type of things. This is a purely physical description. Be specific, right down to the slightest details that will make your character an individual. And don't just concentrate on the character's facial appearance. Describe the entire body, from the top of the head to the tips of the toes. Remember that statistics will affect the way your character looks - a large size and low strength, for example, will probably mean that your character is tall and skinny, or overweight.

Now create a history for your character. Who were

his parents, what was his schooling like, what went wrong in his life, what went right? Basically you want to create a detailed history from birth to the point at which your character starts the game. But be careful here - you may want to check some of the details with your GM, because you don't want to have a character that may throw the game out of balance. A crown prince in a group of slaves, for example, would not be a good idea. Stats are also important - a character with a low intelligence or education would hardly have attended Harvard...

Mindset

What are your character's likes, dislikes and general beliefs? This basically determines your character's deepest personality, things that may never be seen by other characters, but which are vitally important to your character's psychological make-up. Be specific here, but remember that most people have at least two sides to them - their real selves, and the façade they show the world. Don't deal with the latter here. At this point you must worry about the character's deepest self, secrets and all.

External Factors

Here you detailed all external aspects of your character's life - job, family, friends and so on? These have some influence on him, of course, and might make for some very interesting plot devices for your GM to use. A character with a child, for example, may set a whole new plot line in motion when the kid is kidnapped, and needs to be rescued.

5.

Finally, write an essay about who your character appears to be. What does he wear? What weapons does he prefer? Does he have any habits or catch phrases? This essay details the character that other players see. Sure, some may learn his deeper self, but this is the mask that your character wears for

Once you have completed these, you will have a very well constructed personality to play. Use these essays as a guide while playing, and you will have a consistent and believable character. But people do change, so use the remainder of your character book to keep tabs on events that happen during the game which may affect your character, and keep track of any changes that your character may undergo.

Also, keep your GM posted. Let him read the essays, and notify him of important changes that may happen to your character. This could lead to interesting plot devices that could involve your character in the story even more!

Product Review

GURPS

Steve Jackson Games have produced (quite a while ago, in fact) a game system that covers all bases. Called the Generic Universal Role Playing System, or GURPS for short, the game consists of basic core rules that can be used in

virtually any situation. Add to this a vast amount of source material and setting guides, and you have probably got the most versatile game ever created.

The rules system for GURPS is fairly simple (although not as simple as some) and the settings for the game are virtually endless. Any situation or setting can be covered by GURPS, and a great many have, including titles based on other role playing games (like Deadlands and Cyberpunk), titles based on popular literature (Terry Prachett's Discworld has been covered) and a myriad of others (like Cthulhu-Punk and Goblins) - even PC games, like the GURPS version of Sid Meyer's Alpha Centauri. The fact that the same rule system is used throughout all of these titles (of which there are several hundred) means that players can easily be carried from one setting to another, sliding from genre to genre with relative ease.

GURPS is a virtually limitless system, and with the additional source books (which cover anything from equipment to monsters and much more) the only constraints on the game is the imagination.

Because of the way GURPS is structured, it makes playing several "different" games possible for a relatively small cash outlay. Also, players and GMs can get all the variety they want without having to worry about learning new rule systems constantly. While it does seem that GURPS has every base covered, you need to be wary of the expansion settings you buy - some require sourcebooks that you may not have. However, if this is the case, required books are generally listed on the back cover of each sourcebook, which certainly makes things a lot simpler. GURPS is not the most elegant system - not by a long shot - and the rules may get a little sticky every now and then, but the versatility of the title, plus the wide variety of books available, makes it a hands-down winner in the role playing game arena.

Walt "Shryke" Pretorius Versatile Lots of books needed Huge variety available

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The second of the freely released episodes from The Animatrix, Program is written and directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri. In the simulated world of a Samurai training program, CIS, a soldier of Zion, is forced to choose between love and her comrades in the real world.

ON

THE

CD

Trigun

Once again we enter the world of Anime, the ever popular Japanese animation art form that supports a growing sub-culture within the gaming community...

by anton lines

nani? an introduction to japanese.

A healthy interest in the Japanese language is important to any anime fan. Subtitles often leave out interesting information, and without truly understanding what is being said, you end up missing out on word-plays and subtle references. Learning a little Japanese will give you a more in-depth perspective on your chosen form of entertainment. Eventually, the goal is to speak the language fluently, so as to watch anime as it was originally created, without the need for distracting subtitles. However, one has to start somewhere, and so I have prepared a small Japanese crash-course.

The first step to learning Japanese is pronunciation. Contrary to popular belief this is actually fairly simple. There are five vowel sounds, just like in English: "a" (pronounced "uh"), "e" (pronounced "eh"), "i" (pronounced "ee"), "o" (pronounced "au" as in "caught"), and "u" (pronounced "oo"). All the consonants are said the same way we say them, with the exception of the Japanese "r" which is a very nasal sound that lies somewhere between the "r", "l" and "d" sounds in English. (This is why the Japanese commonly confuse their r's and l's). By using this pronunciation key, you can work out how to say almost any Japanese word.

After mastering that, it is important to start recognising common words and phrases as they are used in context. Keep an ear out for the words you know. The more you learn, the more you will start to pick up on. Part 2 of the course will follow next month, along with vocabulary updates every month. Certain long words have shorter alternatives, and those will be indicated in brackets.

Japanese Word / Phrase:

/ Phrase: English Meaning: What? / What is it? / Huh?

Nani Konichiwa Sayonara

Hello Goodbye Please

Onegai shimasu (**short.** Onegai) Arigatou

Please Thank you Sorry

Gomen nasai (short. Gomen)

Sorry I'm home

Okaerinasai (**short.** Okaeri)

Welcome back Great! / That's great Pleased to meet you

Sugoi Hajime mashite

Trigun

Genre: Science Fiction

Year: 1998

Producer: Madhouse Productions

Format: Series Episodes: 26

Language: English / Japanese with English subtitles

Availability: Uncommon

Concept	9
Story	9
Soundtrack	8
Characters	10
Animation	9
Translation	8
Total Score (out of 100)	94

Vash the Stampede, the Humanoid Typhoon, is the legendary outlaw with a price-tag of 60 billion dollars on his head. He is reputed to have killed countless men, women and children, destroying entire cities in his wake. Although nobody truly knows what he looks like. Nevertheless, over 300 insurance claims have been filed due to the damage he has caused, and so the Bernadelli Insurance Company has sent two inspectors, Meryl Stryfe and Milly Thompson, to find Vash and investigate the claims. There seems to be a lot of confusion surrounding his actual identity.

As with most character-based animes, the story usually ends up writing itself, and this one is written particularly well. It is basically all about Vash, his exploits, the people he interacts with, and the history behind his current situation. I am inclined to quote a friend of mine who called it Kenshin* with guns. In a far future world where humans have left Earth and settled on a barren desert-planet, we journey with Vash as he pursues his unknown quest, running into bounty-hunters, hijackers and a mysterious group of assassins calling themselves the Gung-ho Guns. The overall setting bares a strong resemblance to that of old American westerns, (saloons, ghost towns, lack of water, showdowns, etc) with the added edge of more advanced technology. However, it is not a western in the classic sense, and it will not detract from the show for those who are not western fans. There is humour, action and drama packaged together. Of course, many other titles also adopt this combination approach, but the mark of Trigun is a seamless ensemble.

The setting is supported by an enjoyable soundtrack of original rock and jazz music. If

those genres are your preference, the soundtrack album is a worthwhile purchase. (Note, I have subsequently added a soundtrack category to the scoreboard.)
Animation wise, the

action sequences are particularly detailed. Exceptional attention has also been payed to the interaction between characters and scenery, something that is often neglected. Vash's expressions are thoroughly brilliant, and you will seldom see a cast as visually diverse as Trigun's. Although, the animators have taken the occasional shortcut ("cheating" with still frames that appear to be in motion) in the establishment shots, and certain characters lack substance in the drawing. But the backgrounds are superb and the atmosphere is enthralling. If I had to include a rating category for pure style, Trigun would score 11 out of 10. Nishimura Satoshi (surname first, the Japanese way), the show's director, has created a visual extravaganza, thankfully supported by an intelligent script, dedicated animators and a strong voice cast. Comparing the "cinematography" of Trigun to other animes, is like comparing that of The Matrix to other live-action films.



M

www.megatokyo.com

Allright, every gamer worth his salt knows this comic just as well as his Penny Arcade, however this is one of the best Web-comics out there, a brilliant blend of both Otaku and gamer culture... something for everyone. Hail to the great Piro and Largo!

Shiroi nikoGe <white featheRs>

Black Blade

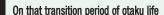
Well where do I begin?

Bishoju is literally translated to "Beautiful Girl"

Bishoju games are a huge part of Otaku culture in Japan, and are referred to as "Dating Sims" in the Western world. These games generally throw you into the ideal situation (college student / hotel manager etc) to meet beautiful anime girls and attempt to date / form relationships with them... A world where women are all beautiful, no-one is out of your league, and with enough perseverance even the most socially inadequate otaku can win the heart of a beautiful young woman...

Now before you all start labeling me a Hentai and a freak who sits in a corner, hear me out. Bishoju games due to their popularity in Japan are produced at a rate of knots with new titles emerging each week. Anime studios, when in need of money, produce dating sims as they are relatively easy to produce when compared to an anime series so don't be surprised to find something like a Gainax logo at the startup of your dating sim. Due to the nature of these games, most of them contain adult content and I'd have to slap a 2-18 rating on just about all of them (you do get clean ones as well, although they are about as rare as an original copy of Prince of Persia). My own interest in these games stems from the "interactive anime" aspect, as it is just like playing a part in an anime, the schools, the culture (Spring Moon festivals... eating Bento under a Sakura tree etc.) the Japanese way of living, all of this is reflected in a good Bishoju game. If you forego the nasty stuff it can be a fully enjoyable experience; you get to make decisions which affect your characters way of life in every way, what type of person you wish to become, academic, sporty (yea right), a playboy, a geek or a downright honest romantic. I must however stress that there are a lot of unsavoury titles out there, and the good ones are in fact rather rare - I have come across titles that could make a mammoth physically ill, so be wary of the titles you choose. Our resident Dating Sim analyst Kitfox has compiled a list of the cleanest and best titles to look out for, he is South Africa's foremost expert on the matter - visit the "Yomikaki" section of Black Blade's website for more.

- Serpent



It usually follows a particular formula, the evolution of an otaku, it's something I've seen many times. Once an otaku has moved past the mainstream anime and has begun to dig deeper into the culture, certain things start to happen.

The first most noticeable thing is the sudden interest in the Japanese language and culture. This usually accompanies the

watching of subtitled anime, which anyone who has a shot at being a real otaku will prefer to dubbed anime. The intensity of this interest can vary from person to person, ranging from a genuine fascination, whereby an otaku might take an interest in the language and frequently wonder about what ramen tastes like, to all out fanaticism, where he might actually start sleeping on the floor and trying to find places to buy a hakama. On the language front, the interest usually begins when the otaku starts to pick up a few frequently used words, of which "baka" (idiot) is usually among the first. From here, he might move into studying Japanese from a book or even a Japanese language course. The Japanese culture can truly fascinate some otaku, sometimes to the point where they get crazy ideas about selling all their worldly possessions just for one trip to Japan.

Gamers and otaku are closely linked, and in some cases, overlapped societies. Console gamers in particular are usually not strangers to Japanese language and anime style ideas since so many console games come from Japan and make use of anime graphics and action. For this reason, it's quite common to find gamers becoming otaku and otaku becoming gamers. Two dimensional fighting games and console style RPGs both frequently use anime graphics and Japanese dialogue, encouraging otaku to look more at games and the gamer to watch more anime. PC gamers are more of a mixed bag, however, some fit right into otaku culture, others couldn't fit even if you compressed them into bricks.

Anime merchandise also becomes a big part of the otaku experience. Anime posters, anime wall scrolls, anime mouse pads, actions figures, T-shirts, keyrings, coffee mugs, you name it, the newly matured anime fan will spend whatever his finances can afford him. Let's not forget the anime wallpaper on the PC-using otaku's desktop. It's also inevitable that he'll take a liking to one or two of the opening or closing theme songs from anime. It's only a short step from there into full blown J-pop (Japanese pop), which is classed as pop music, but is wholly unique in its own way. I remember the first anime themes I liked, the closing theme of New Dominion Tank Police, "Just fall in love" and the closing theme of Genocyber episodes one and two, "Fairy Dreaming". Then there's the martial arts side of things. Anime deals with martial arts extensively, and a lot of otaku follow up on the more realistic portrayals of these deadly fighting styles. It's a lot of fun if you can find a place to learn a genuine martial art. Failing that, some otaku fancy themselves as self-trainable, and set about performing complex martial arts maneuvers on one another -

or trying to at least. This is very amusing and sometimes painful to watch. For the safety of all concerned, don't let an otaku anywhere near anything that vaguely resembles a sword after he's been watching martial arts anime.

That about sums up the key issues at least. There's plenty more for the budding otaku to explore, like the Japanese board games, Go and Shogi, and certain Japanese literature, like Miyamoto Musashi's Go rin no sho, the book of five rings, Miyamoto's famous philosophy on combat in feudal Japan, which any would be swordsman will want to read. But there's far too much to mention here... if you're interested, you can always explore the otaku lifestyle yourself.

- KnightGainax

which is classed as pop m of New Dominion Tank Polic Then there's the martial art realistic portrayals of these that, some otaku fancy the or the contract of the contract of

As you know, finding anime in South Africa is a rather tough task. We would therefore like to request that any business dealing with anime on a commercial basis please contact the magazine [ed@nag.co.za] so that we may enlighten our readers as to your existence.

the LAZY GAMER'S guide to the Game Boy Advance SP

What's this? A new Game Boy Advance? Yes, Nintendo took to heart all the complaints over the GBA, and they released the Game Boy Advance SP, complete with a backlit screen, a new design and a rather inflated price tag. But it's so gosh-darn cute! Who can put a price on that? Nintendo, obviously...

GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

The LCD screen This is identical to the Game Boy Advance - 240 x 160 pixels with 32,000 simultaneous colours. The new addition is the backlight, which means you can now actually see the game you're playing. The switch lets you put the backlight off.

The models

Get it in three colours: Gunmetal Purple, Cobalt and Platinum. This will cost you R 1,699, a rather pricey R 400 mark-up from the GBA. The unit has rechargeable Lithium-Ion batteries that last up to 10 hours with the backlight, and 18 hours without.

Cute, isn't it?

Folded, the GBA SP comes in at a convenient 8 x 8 x 2cm. This fits into any pocket, not to mention all the third-party pouches for it.



The D-pad

The D-pad is slightly bigger, and less raised than the original one. It's just as smooth, though, and doesn't cramp your thumb as much as the GBA's did.

Sound!

The buttons

screen.

the buttons are not as raised as the original design, but they are still as comfortable. The two shoulder buttons are at the back, behind/beneath the

The SP uses the same sound specifications of the GBA - 16-bit sound. There is no headphone jack though - you'll have to buy that separately.

The Games

Just like the GBA, the GBA SP can handle Game Boy and Game Boy Color games as well. In fact, it's identical to the GBA, which means there are around 300 titles (excluding the GB and GBC ones) to play with.

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FREELOADER

There is free stuff galore out there. And all you need to find it is a net connection and a few freeware sites. Or you can simply read Freeloader, where we've tested these programs already, and seen what the sub standard ones do to your system...



Slimbrowser

f you haven't discovered the joys of tabbed browsing yet, you must feel really empty, disorganized and generally unhappy. You'll spend lots of cash trying to find out what it is that all those happy, shiny people have and you don't. Well, go no further, because for the price of this mag you can get Slim Browser, finally released in its free format. Granted, we can't guarantee that it's why those people are happy, but it's a good start...

The first browser to properly support multiple windows was Opera, and the browser race has come along quite a bit. Tabbed browsers are becoming more and more common, mainly because it's so much easier. It's quite rare to have only one or two windows open, and these often start to clutter your task bar.

Around the office, the favourite tabbed browser has to be Crazy Browser, but Slimbrowser has the same appeal as it's an IE-powered browser, and it's fast and compact. In fact, the interface will remind you a lot of Crazybrowser. It also comes with the pop-up killer and Group facilities, though it doesn't allow you to lock tabs.

It looks cool, though skinning isn't supported.

A cool feature is the Auto-Login menu, where you can set an auto-login for a website i.e. when you arrive at the site and you have Autologin set for it, but you don't get logged in, Slimbrowser will do the honours.

Foobar 2000

Despite the whole ruckus over it between P2P networks and the Record Industry, digital music is great. You can rip your collection and keep all your favourite songs on

your machine. You can even carry them around on the ever-growing MP3 players, or write yourself a custom CD. Of course, the main application remains playing them on your PC, but low-end users are being left in the latest releases of players such as Winamp, Sonique and Musicmatch. The fact is, some people out there simply can't handle applications that demand a handful of memory and a fast processor.

Though not quite on par with those players, Foobar 2000 is a free alternative for low-

end users.

And it's quite deceptive in its appearance, since the app has a lot more to it than meets the eye. From loading you are presented with a big, blank window awaiting you to load up

your playlist - be this an actual list, a file or a directory. Once you have this done, minimize the window, and control all the action from the Foobar icon that lives on your system tray.

If you click on Options, though, you'll get presented with a ton of things to tweak from ripping options to playback through the various services on your PC and other tweaks to make your sound or performance better. A nice addition is to add global shortcuts, which affect Foobar no matter what app you are in. Most players don't support this, though it is becoming a more common feature. Foobar 2000 is deceptive in its size and resource usage, but there's a lot more under the hood. It doesn't have the plugin base that Winamp does, but it's not meant to compete against the likes of those players

under the hood. It doesn't have the pluging base that Winamp does, but it's not meant to compete against the likes of those players.

Irfanview

There are two schools out there on picture viewers. The

first prefer the shareware app ACDSee and then there's the group who prefer Irfanview, a freeware option. That's the fundamental difference between the two, except that we also happen to think that Irfanview is better. And we're right, because we get to write articles about it! Using Irfanview is pretty simple. All you need to do, after installing the program, is specify which file formats it should handle. Considering the program can process nearly every graphic format under the sun, rather not tell it to handle everything, since these will include eMP3s,

movie files and other media formats. Once you have those you want, all you need to do is double-click on the image file, and it will open in Irfanview.



The program allows you to browse all the images in a folder. It will also rename incorrectly-named extensions of

THE

files it recognizes. The real power comes, though, in its resizing and batch-processing. You can resize and manipulate images in a range of manners, though obviously it's not as feature rich as, say, Photoshop. The batch processing allows you to grab a bunch of files, state what you want done (such as resizing, renaming, format change or whatever needs to be done), specify where it should go and click on OK.

All in all, Irfanview isn't offering anything new that other similar programs can't offer, but for one it's free (and yet of the same quality) and secondly its very light on resources and very easy to use. If you work with images a lot, give it a try.

Empty Folder

Empty Folder

Empty Folder is a small program that searches
your machine for empty folders and lists them for you.

Granted, empty folders do not take up a lot of space, but
they do clutter your drives, and you'd be surprised just
how many are left behind thanks to half uninstalls or
just general user tardiness. Either way, it won't hurt to
check.

























WWW

www.engrish.com

Who needs stink in grammar anyway?

One thing non-English countries are famous for, especially the ones in the Far East, is the misuse of the English language. We often don't realize it, but it can be a pretty damn confusing means of communication. Of course, some places just get it dead wrong, and the results are often hilarious. If you think "All you bases are belong to us" is the worst example of really bad English in the media, think again...

Engrish.com is all about listing bad examples of English in advertising, in particular Japan. To quote some examples "All Objects on the Earth are made of Powder" or perhaps "Why don't you have anything to drink? Choose one making you better feeling already!" And it gets worse from there onwards.

Each misuse is backed with a nice photo of the ad or product, and there's quite a lot to browse and chuckle at. Once you feel truly inspired and you want to take the message out to the world, go buy something at their shop, like a "No Smorking" t-shirt.

tenebrae.sourceforge.net Quake gets a new jacket

Tenebrae isn't a new thing, but for those who are not in the know, it's a modification that will show Quake as you've never seen it before. Okay, for starters, if you don't know what Quake is, we might forgive your obviously newbie-induced lack of historical appreciation. Quake was the first shooter id released to really use a full blown 3D engine, and every single shooter currently on the market has to thank Quake in some form or another. Of course, when Quake arrived, all you needed was 8mb of ram and a 4mb video card to power it - a bit below our 512mb ram and 128mb graphic card options of today. Bump-mapping? Realtime lighting and

health?

Ħ

quick

www.slavercise.com Burn, baby, burn

So what do you get when you mix aerobics with, err, S&M? Well, you get a woman in tight leather clothes, stilettos and a whip getting you to burn off those extra pounds. The latest fad for bored people who simply need a fad to get anything once is here, and it's called Slavercise. Yikes!

such fancy things weren't in games yet.

Tenebrae makes major modifications to the Quake code that allows you to run the game with stunning lighting effects, fog effects, real-time shadows and other things that really make the game something special again. The developers of the free mod also announced Tenebrae 2, which will be stand-alone (you need to have Quake 1 to run Tenebrae), but will only support Quake 3 maps. Hit the website and check out the vast selection of screenshots, and grab the modification.

www.casinoincgame.com Build a cash empire

Ever wanted to be the man to know in town? Well, that means you need connections and money. And what better way to get those than with your own Casino? Casino Inc. is one of Konami's upcoming PC-only games that allow you to build a casino empire. Sure, it sounds like just another sim, but with a name like Konami behind it, you need to give it some credit.

The game takes you to the 1970s where you start off your casino and have to battle other casinos, professional gamblers and the ever-present banks and mob families. The website gives a bit of insight into the game, including a rather amusing section that gives famous quotes to inspire you on building your empire. But we're here to learn about the game, and there's plenty of that. There are movies, wallpapers and 360 degree movies to download, and a forum to ask questions. There's also a "Do You Feel Lucky?" button that will open one of the site's pages randomly.

A nice design for what appears to be a really cool game. We'll know that later, though, when it's released, but in the mean time if gambling on your empire is your thing, head to the site.

www.comixpedia.com Yea Comics mecca

Finally, a site that focuses on webcomics. This art form features quite often on these pages. And for good reason - it's quite a big field. But sadly there are no real magazine

sites to give us an insight to what's what, what's happening and what's hot. In comes Comixpedia, a site that has a few names attached to it which would be familiar to avid webcomic fans.

Comixpedia delivers interviews with top artists, features on such things as the history of strips and sites, and gives a general hub where fans of the genre can find out more about what's going on.

It's backed by a nice design, and though there still remains quite a bit of tweaking to be done, the site can only go from strength to strength.

coke!

refreshments

No, not the Peruvian Marching Powder. This month, a bunch of sites that have to do with the most consumed liquid under the sun (except maybe if you poll fish). Coca-Cola is huge, but exactly how big can one soft drink get? Here we go...

www.coca-cola.com

Of course we have to list the main site first. It's a flashy affair, and not really interesting. Move right along for the cooler stuff.

www.dietcoke.com

I suspect when Coke had a strategic meeting with their web designers, they agreed on "pointless" and "Mundane" to be the messages coming from the design. More interesting than the main site, though.

www.vanilla.coke.com

Yup, you get the ambrosia of the gods in bottle form.

Not here, though, but it's in the States. And this site has a picture of a bottle of it to taunt you.

www.cs.ucsd.edu/users/bsy/coke.html

Ever wanted a list of all the vending machines that are accessible from the web? Here you go. My question is: how do you get there fast enough without someone taking your stuff?

www.vanillacokefans.com

What can I say? Some people simply don't have lives. It's a drink, people!

www.blueneptune.com/~maznliz/marius/coke.shtml

Coke cans can explode when kept in low temperatures for too long. This site is all about researching this event. It even has pics of cans that look like they exploded.

www.pl8s.com/coke.htm

Coke is all over the world, and that means there are tons of different bottles and designs for the stuff. Over here you can take a look at most of them. There are far more than you'd think...













TRADER













IT IS YOUR DESTINY

EVIL SPACE PIRATE. BUT REMEMBER, EVERYTHING YOU DO WILL AFFECT

HOW PEOPLE RELATE TO YOU.

SO BE NICE, OR DON'T. IT'S UP TO YOU





Freelancer is an epic space adventure that combines a deep storyline, the action of 3-D space-combat, the exploration of a dynamic, living universe and trading in a rich galactic economy where the player's decisions drive the action.



Player of the Month



profile

Name:

Niek

Hellhound

Occupation:

Student

Achievements:

- Currently in 1st place at Mayhem Offline League 2003 (Team: Evolve)
- Represented South Africa at the World Cyber Games 2002
- 1st at Worfaire 2002 Finals (Team: Damage Control)
- 1st at Worfaire 2002 Prelims (Team: Damage Control)
- 2nd place at WCG 2002 Continent vs Continen
- 2002 Paris Garage Santa Paris Garage Paris Paris Garage Paris Pari
- that Gamers Gate CPL Qualifier 2002 (**Team**.
- 3rd at Worfaire 2001 Preliminaries (Team: XTC)



<The_Basilisk> Has gaming always come naturally to you?
<Hellhound> I think I do have some natural talent, but I've been playing games for five years now, and I keep improving. I think it's a little bit of talent and a lot of practice. The more talent you have, the better you are with more practice.

<The_Basilisk> Tell us about the Continent vs Continent competition at the World Cyber Games.

 My team consisted of players from South Africa, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan. We spoke four different languages (five if you

include Afrikaans), so we had problems understanding each other, but in the end it was a lot of fun. The guy from Japan could speak four languages so we made him captain just for communication. The high point of the competition was playing against Team USA, beating them by 2 rounds. Overall, we came second, losing to Team Europe in the finals.

<The_Basilisk> What does it take for a team to be successful?

<he>Hellhound> For any good team to be successful, your attitude towards your teammates should be positive. Always respect them and if you have problems, don't make any drastic decisions. Other than that, it's just a commitment to practice hard.

< The Basilisk > What are your aspirations for the future?

<he|lhound> The main reason I play is because it can take you places. Last year it took me to Korea, and this year I would really like to go to France for the E-Sports World Cup. Our team is practicing hard to do very well there, to show the world that South African gaming is not as bad as they think.



NAG @ 1000manLAN

Do you think you can do a better job of designing a NAG cover than what we can? Are you a budding artist that's been itching to see your work on magazine shelves across the country? Do you worry that your goldfish get bored swimming around and around and around in their bowl? If you answered yes to any of the above questions then pay careful attention for we are about to make your dreams a reality!

As the primary media sponsor of the 1000ManLAN (see article on page 24 & 25), NAG Magazine will be holding a different kind of competition at the event. In addition to our attending the event, we are giving you an opportunity to set your creative spirit free. All you have to do is come up with a unique and original cover image for the magazine, using the NAG logo, bring it along to the 1000manLAN and we will pick a winner after all the entries have been received.

So what's the big deal and more importantly what is the prize?

Well, if your design is chosen as the best of the lot we will publish it on an upcoming cover of NAG! That's right, not only will everyone think you're a smarty pants, your handiwork will be on display for the whole nation to admire. Also remember our magazine ends up on the desks of almost all the major game development companies in the world, including Blizzard and id Software.

So what do you have to do?

You are required to use the NAG logo in your image. Your submission needs to be in 300 dpi .TIF format or .PSD and must be A4 in size. You can e-mail us at comp@nag.co.za and we will send you our high resolution logo to use in your design. Please note that you will have to bring your design on a CD to the NAG stand at 1000manLAN or have a CD delivered to our offices before Thursday 24 April 2003. If you E-mail us the design it'll get deleted.

Please remember to include all your contact details along with your submission so we can get in contact with you should your entry be selected.

You have approximately 3 weeks to get this task done, so once you are done reading this issue, dash off to your PC and get cracking with those designs, images, cartoons or whatever...

We will also be publishing some of the other best looking designs in the same issue.

CPL to increase age requirement in 2004

The Cyberathlete Professional League have announced that commencing in 2004 a new rule will be in place requiring that all tournament participants are at least 18 years of age on or before the first day of the events. Commencing in 2004 the Bring-Your-Own-Computer (BYOC) area of its events will have an age restriction of 17 and older. Minors under the age of 17 can register for the event as spectators, but must be accompanied by an adult (18 years of age and older) and/or provide the league with a signed parental release.

Frank Nuccio, commissioner of the CPL, said, "As the sport continues to mature the requirements for CPL tournament participation are also evolving. Some teams are being encouraged to incorporate, enter into contracts with their members and seek corporate sponsorships to receive official sanctioning from the league. The CPL also

has a Terms and Conditions Agreement that must be accepted during registration. These agreements and transactions require adult validation and the CPL seeks to raise the bar of what constitutes a professional tournament environment. These measures will allow a wider acceptance of the league, as it raises the standards higher than those of the entire industry. We understand that the gaming community may once again frown at these efforts and that other tournament organizers may see this as an opportunity to relax their own standards in hopes of getting larger audiences. But CPL's role as an industry leader must include decisions that are primarily focused on the future of the sport and its potential for growth and expansion."

The CPL does not intend to raise the age requirement beyond this level. The age requirement for all 2003 tournaments is 17 years of age and older.



The World that is...



Nintendo GameCube Quest

The Nintendo GameCube Quest 2003 got off to a magnificent start at Eastgate Shopping Centre in JHB on Saturday the 8th of March. Sponsors of this event included STA Travel, Nintendo SA and New Age Gaming Magazine. The competition worked like this - you had to play Wave Racer, Tony Hawks Pro Skater 4, Need For Speed Hot Pursuit and Mario Super Smash Brothers. Each game counted towards your overall score and the person with the best total score was crowned the winner.

The winner of the Eastgate regional was... Aidan Musnitzky. In close second place was Blake Prinsloo and Roy Lovett finished third overall. Aidan walked away with Nintendo shirts, a GameCube console, four games and a one-year subscription to NAG Magazine! If that wasn't enough, he also earned himself a place in the finals due to take place at Monte Casino on the 5th of April where he will be treated like royalty and stand a one in four chance to win the over-all prize... a trip to America! During the celebrity match-up, lan F from 5FM proved that he is a competent driver, however, Sasha Martinengo had his license revoked by a traffic officer that happened to stroll through Eastgate.

The second leg of this competition was held at the Gateway Shopping Centre in

Uhmlanga, Durban. One thing I can tell you is that the Gauteng gamers are a tad better at GameCube games - perhaps the surfer boys will shine at the finals. The winner of the Durban event was Grant van Goeverden and he was in a league of his own! Micheal Matthews and Nathaniel van Rooyen were second and third respectively. Funny thing is, Grant actually introduced himself, whilst we were setting

respectively. Funny thing is, Grant actually introduced himself, whilst we were setting up the day before the event, as the winner. His exact words were "Hi, my name is Grant and I will be winning this event tomorrow!" That was half the battle won, my friend! As at the time of writing this article, the Pretoria and Cape Town events had not yet taken place however you can view all the photos and results on www.gamersgate.co.za.

Command & Conquer Generals LAN

For those of you that missed this one... Na, na, na, nana! Electronic Arts, Pinnacle Micro, Proline Computers, D-Link, New Age Gaming Magazine and Logitech were our sponsors.

The Proline computers that each person played on had the following specs: Intel Pentium 4, 2gig with 533 FSB | 256 DDR 333 RAM | MSI GeForce4 4200 Titanium Graphics card | 17" monitor | Logitech MX300 mouse. This is the highest spec sponsored competitive PC provided for players in South Africa thus far. I can tell you that Generals ran beautifully on these babies:) Each participant received an awesome Command & Conquer t-shirt, a personalised photo and a customised mouse pad. After the welcome speech (that I managed to keep to less than 45500 hours) supper was served to all and then it was on to

The final two Generals, Mathew Hodge, aka nf-Manichean and Danny Day, aka Disleksia played an awesome game, but there can only be one... Congrats to our first SA C&C General, Mathew Hodge! Mathew won himself some really cool prizes including a Palm Zire, EA games, R400 cash, a one-year subscription to NAG and an autoberth to Gamers Gate's ES World Cup qualifier to be held at The Carousel during June 2003.

If you would like to stand a chance of receiving an invite to the next event, simply e-mail len@gamersgate.co.za the correct answer to this question: Who distributes Command & Conquer Generals in South Africa?

Electronic Sports World Cup

Gamers Gate is pleased to announce that we have been accepted as South Africa's official qualifying centre for the Electronic Sports World Cup in France. This means that we will be hosting an event at The Carousel Casino, north of Pretoria where 7 winners will be sent to France to represent South Africa!

From July 8-13 2003, at the Futuroscope in Poitiers, France will host one of the world's biggest electronic sports competitions. The Electronic Sports World Cup features three official tournaments: HL Counter-Strike (played in 5 on 5), Unreal Tournament 2003 (played in 1 on 1) and WarCraft III (played in 1 on 1). These tournaments will gather 32 teams for Counter-Strike, 32 players for Unreal Tournament 2003 and 32 players for WarCraft III. The winners of these three disciplines will compete for 150 000 euros

in cash prizes.

In order to participate in one of the official competitions, players will have to qualify in one of the 35 preliminaries as listed on the official site (www.esworldcup.com). The preliminaries are composed of 500 tournaments standing in 211 events located in 29 different countries all around the world.

For more information visit www.esworldcup.com.

The Carousel

Generals!

From the 13th to the 15th of June 2003, Gamers Gate will host SA's first ES World Cup qualifier. Registrations are now open on www.langames.co.za for participation in Counter-Strike, WarCraft III or Unreal Tournament 2003 as our main competitive games. Other games and servers that will be hosted at the event will be announced closer to the time.

The entrance fee is R200 for competitors and R150 for BYOC players. This will entitle you to free accommodation for the weekend, a refund of R50 for the tollgate fees (upon presentation of your tollgate receipt) and a weekend of fun-filled gaming. Not to mention an opportunity to represent SA in France in July!

Finally, to all the clan leaders \dots Make sure that your team all have a valid Passport

and that you are able to travel during July. Sadly, only competitors older than 17 will be eligible to represent South Africa in France. However, this does not mean that Gamers Gate will not allow under 18's to compete at this event. As always, we welcome everyone! More details of this event will be published in next month's issue of NAG as well as on www.gamersgate.co.za.

Shuttle X-Treme LAN

WenTek International and Shuttle in conjunction with LanGames, K-Sports, Gamers Gate and Mayhem, will be hosting their first ever LAN party at Pine Lodge Conference Centre in George from the 11th - 13th of April. This will be the first LAN of this magnitude ever held on the Garden Route. The entrance fee will be R150 per person excluding accommodation, which is available on the premises. Food and drinks will be available on site.

Some of South Africa's top gamers will be attending the event from JHB and Cape Town (this includes the two top clans from JHB) and transport will be provided for 60 entrants from the Cape Town area.

The competition games being played are Counter-Strike, Quake 3 Arena, WarCraft III and Unreal Tournament 2003 and prizes for these events include high-end Shuttle Main boards for the Counter-Strike winners, a Shuttle XPC bare bone machine for the See you next month...

Quake 3 winner and 1 GHZ of DDR memory for the winner of WarCraft III. Other prizes are also up for grabs as well as lucky draws.

Only 144 gamers will be able to participate in this event so first come first served. This is the one opportunity you have to prove your metal against fellow gamers, and legends alike so don't be caught sleeping or you will be missing out!

For more information visit www.langames.co.za or contact Mike on 082 800 4888.

Len Nery Len@GamersGate.co.za Or call me on 0800-FerrariRULES :)

The Electronic Arts / G8Keeper 1000manLAN

The largest LAN ever held in South Africa is being planned for the weekend of the 25th of April, 2003. Run by G8Keeper, the event is billed to be a showcase of competitive and pure fun gaming, to show the public what this "sport" is all about. Currently, the record for the largest LAN in the southern hemisphere was set on January 11th and 12th this year by the Shafted LAN in Australia. The estimated attendance figure was over 1040. Now, G8Keeper intends to shatter that record. The Basilisk spoke with the G8Keeper team - Rocco Strauss (Tournament Director), Lauryan de Jongh (Press & Public Relations), Tinus du Plooy (Registrations) and Stephan Steenkamp (Technical Director) - about the momentous event.

- <The_Basilisk> How did the idea for the 1000manLAN start?
- <G8Keeper> Well, everyone wants to have BIG lans.
 People have tried, but not succeeded. We decided to ignore the problems and try "just doing it." Those that have tried before, failed because of lack of support from the community. We think we are aiming right to get that support
- <The_Basilisk> What previous experience do you have as LAN, and especially as tournament organisers? <G8Keeper> We assisted with the Gamers Gate events in 2002 and also the GLSA at Worfaire 2002 prelims, Kyalami. We believe we are up to managing the logistics, although it is a huge undertaking.
- <The_Basilisk> The Australians currently hold the world record for the largest LAN in the southern hemisphere. SA has previously attempted to break the record before and failed, what makes the 1000manlan different?
- <G8Keeper> The intention is to make sure that it's done by the book, and supported by everyone in the book. Non-gamers will be participating as well. We've spoken to a lot of people and we've learned lessons from all sources. We are making it a "growth" event.
- <The_Basilisk> What media coverage will the event be receiving?
- <G8Keeper> We are still negotiating with various TV and Radio stations as well as magazines. Newspapers will also be involved. The online communities have offered space to review and crit our event, and they will be doing their own report-backs. Of course, we are also aiming to get the Guinness Book of Records there to verify the record attempt.
- <The_Basilisk> Who is sponsoring the event?
 <G8Keeper> Our Event Headline Sponsor is Electronic
 Arts. We have a variety of additional sponsors from all
 the different sectors. NAG Magazine and PC Format, as
 well as various other print and online communities.
 (Several other industry sponsors are still to be
 confirmed.) Prizes will include games, PC goodies,
 branded merchandise, and of course cash and perhaps
 sending players overseas.
- <The_Basilisk> What can you tell us about the
 venue?
- <G8Keeper> The venue consists of two high-ceiling hangars, 6400m2 floor area, with indoor toilets (additional facilities will be provided); walled-off, carpeted sleeping area; carpeted Expo area; "chill" area; Expo stands; kitchen; and the spectator area taking up one entire hangar. The main event hangar is for gamers only, with a small area for Mums & Dads to sit and watch their kids play. A VIP area will adjoin the comp area (so the international guests can partake in some serious gaming).

- <The_Basilisk> Will the focus of the LAN be on a tournament structure or just a "have fun" weekend?
 <G8Keeper> Both! The tournament will be a drawcard for "pro/hardcore" gamers, while the "free-for-all" section will be for new blood & "fun" players. There will be demonstration games featuring the best players, to show what can be done. Our focus is also extended to breaking the myths that the general public have heard about gaming, as well as to support South Africa's gaming future. Charity work will lend a serious side to the LAN.
- <The_Basilisk> Could you tell us about the charity organisations at your event?
- <G8Keeper> We are stressing the aspect of charity.
 This is a big one for Cotlands. We are urging people to bring contributions, there will be very novel collection bins for the stuff. There will be a list of the required items on our website. The person who brings the biggest donation for Cotlands will receive a huge prize.
- <The_Basilisk> How did you decide on the
 competition games?
- <G8Keeper> The list grows as interest for the games grow. There will be a poll on the registration section to see what games are best supported, but we will also be trying to make all the online gamers happy by giving them the opportunity to support their favourite titles. (There's the Xbox competition as well and we've also got interest from the other consoles. SIMS Online will be there too.)
- <The_Basilisk> Could the tournament not possibly become a little congested with so many featured titles? How big a staff will you need to employ?
- <G8Keeper> If we keep the games diverse, it's of wider interest to the public. We've seen 500-player Counter-Strike tournaments, they work, but they only feature one game. By spreading the prizes over more titles, we get a broader interest. With the changes in the large international organisatons (like Quake 3 being dropped from the CPL roster), we think there's room to make everyone happy. Each competition game will be run by the community that supports it, the staff / referees will know the games inside out.
- <The_Basilisk> What format are you following for the
 tournament structure and rules?
- <BKeeper> Most favour the international rules, and who are we to argue? We play by international rules because eventually our aim will be to send gamers overseas. We want SA gamers to get used to the proper formats so that SA can start winning international events. (Each player will be allowed to enter one competition game.)
- <The_Basilisk> An exhibition area will be accompanying the LAN, what types of exhibits are we likely to see?

- <BKeeper> The aim of the exhibit is to showcase new technology within the gaming sphere both PC and console. New products and technologies will also be displayed. There will be additional interests like plastic model-building (through Africa Militaire), and wargames, trading card games, Airforce exhibits, the Virtual Aviation Club, and of course our sponsors will be given the opportunity to display their new market related offerings.
- <The_Basilisk> The general spectator attendance at LANs in South Africa is notoriously low, do you think people will be willing to pay R20/R40 purely to watch? How did you arrive at this amount?
- <G8Keeper> Let's relate it to Cinema-going (roughly the same price). There's not a lot gotten from one movie, it's the additional value we offer that will generate the interest. We offer a chance to try out, ask questions and see people doing the best in PC gaming. Children can be left at the event for some time and they stand a chance of learning something too. We will be giving away a number of prizes to spectators, and everyone will be given the chance to meet the celebrities. Small gift packs will be given to everyone entering the area, so nobody goes away empty handed.
- <The_Basilisk> Which celebrities will be attending the
 event?
- <BKeeper> Celebrities such as Jacques Kallis, Dean Hall and Madam & Eve. The SA national rowing squad will also be putting in an appearance. We've also been trying to organize challenge matches with international players. Invitations have been extended to various international gaming communities, including Australia, Russia and California.
- <The_Basilisk> What additional provisions will be
 made for spectators?
- <BKeeper> There will be state-of-the-art projectors, large format screens, a public announcement system, and info booths with updates on programmes and competitions. The screens will be situated all around both hangars especially for viewing of comps, VIP's etc. Game statistics will be screened as well as HLTV recordings of all competition games and live screenings of the big clashes. There will be an intranet, an IRC server (volunteered by a community member), and the results will be updated on the 1000manlan website.
- <The_Basilisk> What guarantees do you have that power and network issues will be smooth running?
 <g8Keeper> We will only allow the best equipment for the network. There are no compromises, the LAN will be totally routed, including more than 16 km of network cable and 6 routers. We have the city council behind us on the electricity issue, which runs to airforce specifications and is almost impossible to trip. The network will also be running on a full gigabyte backbone.



Everyone ready?

Before you blink, it will be too late! As this issue of NAG is released, we will be heading into April ... Less than 30 days to the 1000manLAN - South Africa's attempt at the Southern Hemisphere LAN Record.

So, what's happened up until the time of writing? Well, Electronic Arts have taken up the challenge and have become the headline sponsor of the event.

The event will now be known as the "Electronic Arts, G8Keeper 1000manLAN". That's a mouthful, but I can guarantee that it's also going to be an eyeful and a pocketful! Gaming communities and IT companies across South Africa have started rising to the occasion too, and we are seeing a marked increase in numbers of people requesting block bookings for their school, clan, IT department and subscribers.

And, as far as games go ... Who says Quake 3 Arena is dead? Just because the CPL and WCG have removed the game from their rosters, does not mean that the communities are dead ... far from it! The Ghost Recon community, based on SIAX SGS, decided to pave the way for themselves to have a major part in the 1000manLAN by organising their own national online competition. Their finals are to be held at the 1000manLAN (for a complete list of games see our advert on page 75).

In our discussions with the communities, we've become aware that competitive gaming is alive and well, and trying to find a new format to be able to suit the evolution that PC gaming is undergoing. With the current revolution being the creation of "professional" gaming teams, the concept of pay-for-play comes to the fore. Event organisers need to realise that the top players want top prizes to aim for and - in exactly the same way - newer, up-and-coming teams need a chance to win and also earn the respect of their peers and seniors.

In an attempt to meet this perceived need, G8Keeper would like to announce our efforts to create an "International Invitational" section for the 1000manLAN event. Our intention is to create a "premier league" for Quake 3 Arena and Counter-Strike, providing world-class competition and experience opportunities for the top 8 to 10 players/teams in those two games (ranking of teams/players will be done in conjunction with communities and gaming service providers). This will allow the smaller and perhaps less experienced players/teams a chance to win the "super league", and EARN a seeding in the next "International Invitational".

As important as competition gaming is, it's not the reason most people will attend the Electronic Arts, G8Keeper 1000manLAN. Many people will not have been to a LAN gaming event before, and some will have never used a computer before. Therefore, we are making sure there are a number of ways to learn about computer gaming and that there is a diversity of things for everyone to do during the event.

Everyone will be able to share in game and product launches, there will be childcare services available, spectator areas for demonstration matches and the finals of every competition. There will be displays of flight simulator games, the South African debut of EA's Sims Online, console game comparisons, and a world record attempt by Africa Militaire for the longest continuous model train on a track driving - this alongside their wargames and model building displays. Additionally, there will be prizes for the competitions, give-aways and lucky draws for members of the public, and a well kitted-out IT exhibition to show you what's new and what's hot.

The 28th Squadron, our hosts at Air Force Base Waterkloof, will be providing a diverse display of Air Force and aircraft technology and memorabilia, and we will be sharing in the experience of running the Air Force's Siyandiza ("We are flying") initiative. This involves computer-based training for 450 previously disadvantaged children during the event to assist in the early identification of potential pilot material. The training will include playing computer games and using flight simulator programs to expose the children to different aircraft, flight conditions, and the world of flight.

In support of Cotlands, a percentage of the proceeds from the door will be donated, and all gamers and members of the public are encouraged to bring toys, blankets, toiletries and baby care products to donate as well. The registered gamer bringing the best donation to Cotlands will win a G-Force 4 Ti4600 Video card!

We are starting a trend to take gaming to new heights internationally and locally. We want to earn the respect we know gaming deserves. See you there!

Rocco Strauss RandoM@g8keeper.co.za 083-604-0456



Yes, another month has rolled on by without any one noticing. 2003 seems to be flying by, hopefully this means everyone is having loads of fun.

LEAGUE NEWS:

Just to bring you up to speed with the Mayhem off-line league.

League results for March:

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
Evolve 2 - 55	T6 - 60	PF - 21	RGC - 24
Evolve 1 - 44	GI Agro - 40	HZO R - 19	CHKNHD - 18
7e - <mark>41</mark>	BHB A - 38	KAN B - 8	AE - 18
DC I - 41	CF A - 36	MIST - 8	TBA - 14
FX - 38	KAN A - 34	CR - 0	KMA A - 16
DC A - 28	CF B - 0	BHB B - 12	KMA B - 0

For more info and results please refer to www.mayhem.co.za.

In other league news, the SAIX on-line Counter-Strike league is about to kick off and news has it that all the top teams in the country are registering for it. If your team has not entered you had best register soon. For more info on this check out the SAIX forums. We will try to keep you up to date on these.

Coming soon, Tribes 2 and Unreal Tournament events. Mayhem had a very successful Tribes 2 soup of the day LAN and all staff are looking forward to the competition and league events, which are to start in the near future. Mayhem staff are also looking into running several UT events in the near future as well. For more info on these, check out www.mayhem.co.za or mail vapour@mayhem.co.za.

LAN LORE:

Everyone has their own personal pain in the neck, and Mayhem has finally got their own (No not Gandalf). As LANs have grown, gamers have become more and more lazy. Where gamers used to work their way through the network neighborhood, more and more gamers now make use of port scanners to find and access shares on the network. At first this seemed harmless. Lately the Mayhem staff have been plagued with complaints from unhappy gamers all up in arms about probed by scanners. Due to this and the fact that more and more of these scanners have the ability to force their way into your P.C, Mayhem have decided to put our foot down Effective immediately the use of LAN Guard and other such tools will NOT be allowed at any Mayhem event.

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

5 April - Monthly link day PTA5 April - Mayhem off-line Counter-Strike League19 April - Mayhem open LAN.19 April - Funky Cow PTA

Just before we leave you alone with your P.C and the game that takes up the time you have left after reading NAG. There is a rumour going around that Mayhem are looking at a venue closer to JHB and another one near PTA. We are not saying that this is not true.

Vapour[SOD]
Spreading rumours is a full time job.
vapour@mayhem.co.za
www.mayhem.co.za

article by: Wolvenoid frags@mailbox.co.za www.vc.org.za



How to host a LAN Part 2



"If you're threatened, fight. If you're bribed, stand strong. If you're tempted, resist. If you're struck down, get up. If you lose, be noble. If you win, be gracious. If you die, be remembered. If you live, be generous, for this is the way of the champion". - **Brandon Bonwell**

The music screams in an eerie crimson red. Vicious words tear at the flesh as they are flung across the room. Slowly your dreams of the big day fade into the shadows. What has gone wrong, where did you wonder off the track? Your most faithful companion in wars across oceans, in duels across the emptiness of space in which you covered for one another, rescue supplied when most in need, is no longer by your side. Why then are you now facing this new exciting challenge on your own?

So since the last issue you have conjured up great plans to finally impress with your brilliance at hosting LAN's. You shared your enthusiasm with anybody that was willing to listen. You recruited your best friends to assist you with the execution of your plan. The problem is, they were soon pounded with your ideas with momentary pauses for the soul purpose of breathing. Your transgression was that you were now only seeing the glory of hosting a LAN and no longer taking into account the valid questions and suggestions that your closest friends were assisting you with. A LAN is not an event that should be hosted by a soul entity. One of the most important aspects of hosting a LAN that you are sure to experience is a factor that is most human - rivalry due to conflicting ideas. Everybody has a great idea, but it takes a great leader to ensure that these ideas are treated with respect and implemented where feasible. You will need to be that leader, you will need to ensure that glory is shared, as well as all the little problems that are due to arise. You should keep in mind that this is very similar to great teamwork in games. You have the expert sniper, the medic, the aggressive attacker, and the sneaky silent one. Hosting a LAN has many soft issues, of which the most important for you will be teamwork. From the previous issue you should have decided on the type of LAN that you wish to host and on the amount of people that you want to cater for. Since space will not allow describing in detail every possible choice, the rest of the installments will be with reference to a LAN catering for 50 people, open to the public and having a predetermined schedule. I might wander off the track once in a while, but this will be clearly indicated. In order to know which disciplines you need to recruit from your Knights of the Round Table, you need to know the definition of a LAN organizer: The mother, father, handyman, network expert, OS yuppie, friend, supplier, provider, pc wizard and poor soul that needs to set up and clean up without a thank you. You will need somebody to do the public relations. This includes all the questions, e-mails, forum postings, advertising and admin regarding your LAN. You will need a bean counter if you are charging an entrance fee. The entrance fee should range between R20 to R50 depending on what

you are offering the gamer. If you are charging an

entrance fee, you should still have somebody that takes

into account all your expenditure versus the budget you

front most of the time, and usually cannot be cancelled

on short notice. Make sure that you have at least this

days planning. You should at least have one poor soul

money available in case anything ruins your perfect

with a basic understanding of networking. This will

have. Keep in mind that the venue has to be paid up

include the ability to fault-find across multiple OS's, network connectivity issues firstly and then a basic understanding of the games that you intend on playing. Sometimes basic issues such a personal firewall may cause a machine not to see servers, and you need to assist. We spent quite a lot of time during our first LAN's helping people connect to the network with basic problems ranging from incorrect address ranges to misbehaving network cards. You should have a local handyman as well that will assist with opening pc boxes to reinsert ram and other cards that got dislodged during traveling. In the case of any power related issues he should at least know how the system is connected and where the breakers are. If you are considering a boot camp type of LAN, you should have a few experienced players with lots of patience and people skills on hand. If you are considering a competition orientation LAN or even a LAN where you provided several servers you should have a server guy. If your venue does not cater for food or refreshments in close vicinity, you should also have the bachelor that is well versed in the specials of take away food. You should by now realize that you won't be able to welcome somebody while taking their money, issuing IP addresses and faultfinding a network connectivity problem to your dedicated server. This is why you will need your friends to assist you. Be kind to them, be gentle, consider going as far as listening to them, as they share their ideas on the big day. Teamwork is of the essence here. Everybody should know what his or her areas of responsibilities are. An individual might share some responsibilities. Just ensure that you do not put all your trust and the success of the LAN into the hands of somebody that is not known for their trustworthiness. I have seen many LAN's where the guy that would bring the 24-port Cisco backbone switch, had to take his little sister for a dress rehearsal, and phones 20 minutes before the start to inform you of his new priorities.

Another reason for sharing responsibility for hosting a LAN is so that you get a different viewpoint. What you perceive to be Mozart might be Metallica to somebody else. Stealing is allowed. This is the greatest tutor that planning cannot replace. The stealing I'm referring to is to go out to similar sized events and steal with your eyes what is working and what needs improvement. The first point that you will most likely notice is the lack of visibility of the organizers. You should realize that the perfect LAN is different for everybody, and the LAN you will host will be tailored according to your taste, but you will be catering for an unknown mass with taste sure to differ from yours. It's your LAN, and you can do as you want, just remember that your guests will only return to the next event if they liked the first.

Some of the other soft issues that you may want to consider is age restriction. If you want a mature audience, you will restrict the amount of possible people that will be interested in attending. If you have no age restriction, smoking and drinking becomes a problem. If you allow smoking, minors may be irritated or not allowed by parents. Smoking has been debated before, and I will not open that can of worms here. Just remember that certain laws with regard to smoking have been passed in the last couple of years. Drinking is a totally different ballgame all together. A mature audience would no doubt want the odd couple of beers. The problem is that for some counting becomes vague after the 7th beer, and they start causing you problems. Thus if drinking is allowed, ensure that you have a bouncer onboard

Since we are scraping the surface of law issues, you might want to consider some form of disclaimer. This is to cover you against issues like software piracy that is sure to exist at your LAN. It needs to indicate that you cannot be held responsible for loss of data due to viruses. If a PC gets knocked over by somebody, and the PC fails to recover from the abuse, your guest should know that you are not going to foot the bill. Here you should note that minors cannot sign for themselves, and parents need to sign the form. Another issue you need to consider is the duration of the event. If you are planning a weekend of LANning, then you will need to consider a lot of small things like where the guests are going to sleep. If it's in winter, the cold cement might not be such a good idea. My advice would be that you first consider a one-day event. A day's success is much better than a weekend's failure. I also get the idea that most people want to play for a day, and then get some rest to carry on with their normal lives. The notable exceptions here are the major once a year events such as Worfaire. If you do not have the courage to confront failure and have the ability to rise above conflict you should maybe reconsider your reasons for hosting a LAN, as these issues will rise to the surface at some stage. If not during the planning, then maybe during your first or 2nd LAN.

So to summarize what we've learned: Gather a group of equally enthusiastic helpers. Become the Borg by assimilating all ideas from attending other similar LAN's. Decide on the type of atmosphere and your target group's age. Most importantly, organize as a team; share the glory as a team.

Yet again I will need to stop scribbling, and I leave you with the following thought ...

Failing to plan is planning to fail. The lack of planning on your part does not constitute an excuse or an emergency on the gamer's part.



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- >> VIA KT333CF Chipset Support 200/266/333 Mhz FSB
- >> DDR 200/266/333 Memory Up to 3GB Max Capacity >> Support AGP 4X, 6 Channel Audio
- Support ATA 66/100/133, 6 USB 2.0
- On-board LAN Port >> Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier



Support Intel Socket 478 Pentium 4 / Celeron CPU >> DDR 200/266 Memory Up to 2GB Max Capacity

>> Intel 845D Chipset Support 400/533 Mhz FSB

>> Support AGP 4X, AC'97 Audio

AB52

>> Support ATA 66/100, 4 USB 1.1

>> Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier



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WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY NOT FOR RETAIL

iD Software have canceled the single-player component of their upcoming expansion pack Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory. They plan to go forward with the multiplayer component, and will release this as a free downloadable add-on.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of powered flight, Microsoft will release Flight Simulator: A Century of Flight this July. The title will include a vast interactive multimedia encyclopaedia, a dynamic weather system, enhanced automatically generated scenery, improved Air Traffic Control functionality, 3D interactive cockpits and 15 new modern aircraft, in addition to the historical aircraft.

COMPUTER GAMES AS A PROPAGANDA MEDIUM

The Hizbullah is a Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim political group. Believe it or not, this faction is busy developing an action game based on battles that took place in southern Lebanon. The game will depict Israeli and American forces as the enemy, and should be available in Lebanon as you read this.

EA AND DICE

Electronic Arts and Digital Illusions (DICE) have cemented a strategic partnership. This move has been prompted by the success of DICE's Battlefield 1942, published by Electronic Arts, and will allow DICE access to EA's worldwide publishing and distribution.

ACTIVISION AND PETER MOLYNEUX TEAM UP

Activision have negotiated distribution rights for Lionhead Studios' upcoming title The Movies, which is expected to be complete next year. The game will allow players to take on the role of movie mogul, but will feature actual movie creation in addition to the usual simulation and management elements.

DRIVER FILM IN THE WORKS

Infogrames have sold the film rights to their Driver franchise to Constantin Film, to be produced by Impact Pictures, a subsidiary of Constantin. The director of Resident Evil and the scriptwriter for The Negotiator will be involved in the project.

MOTOR CITY ONLINE: OFFLINE

Electronic Arts will discontinue Motor City Online, their online racing game, on the 29th of August. The last six weeks of play will not be billable, and existing players will be offered a chance to join Ultima Online or The Sims Online for free, should they be interested.

WRIGHT FLYER SIMULATOR

Another project inspired by the Centennial of Powered Flight is an upcoming flight simulator that will replicate the 1903 Wright Flyer.

The game is in development by Bihrle Applied Research and Third Wire Productions, and will be completed by mid-year. Octagon Entertainment will be responsible for its publication.

New Prince of Persia game

Jordan Mechner, the creator of Prince of Persia, and a division of Ubi Soft are collaborating on Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time for PC, PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance. It is expected to ship toward the end of the year.

/ Ground Control 2



Massive Entertainment have announced plans to release a sequel to Ground Control, to be titled Ground Control 2: Operation Exodus. The game will be similar in style to the original, and will feature a multiplayer drop-in mode to allow players to join any time, as well as powerful modding tools.

More details should be forthcoming at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), in May.

/ Pure Pinball



Pure Pinball, due for release in the next few months, will feature real-time 3D table designs using the Excessive Speed, World War, and Runaway Train pinball tables each with their own visual theme. This game might be unique in a nostalgic kind of way.

/ Warlords IV



Warlords IV: Heroes of Etheria,

originally in development at Strategic
Studies Group, is now under
construction by Infinite Interactive, a
splinter company of SSG.
Expected to retail late this year,
Warlords IV will follow in the
footsteps of its predecessors, offering
turn-based strategy enhanced by the
addition of 3D terrains, new victory
conditions and a span of new
features.

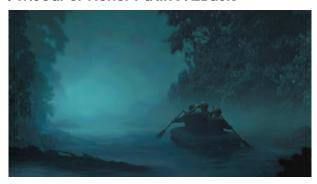
/ Elder Scrolls III: Bloodmoon





A second expansion pack for Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind is on its way from Bethesda Softworks. Bloodmoon will focus heavily on snow and ice conditions, and will be available in May.

/ Medal of Honor Pacific Assault



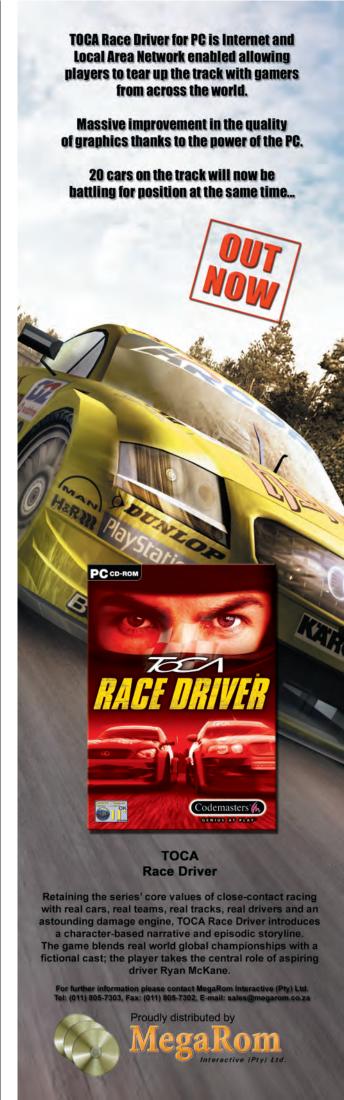
Electronic Arts continue to expand their Medal of Honor range. The company has announced an upcoming expansion pack for Allied Assault, in development at TKO Software. As yet, no details have been given, even a title, but what is known is that it will deal with the Italian campaigns and the North African theatre, and will offer new multiplayer components and is scheduled for release around the middle of this year. Another Medal of Honor project currently underway is Pacific Assault, which will start with the attack on Pearl Harbor and proceed from there into the Pacific theatre. Pacific Assault is scheduled for release next January.

/ Earth 2160



Reality Pump Studios are finishing up work on Earth 2160, a follow-up to Earth 2150. Following the events in the previous title, the same three battling factions are joined by a fourth, an alien race that was imprisoned on Mars long ago and which now wants to escape and colonise the Solar System.

This real-time strategy title will make use of the latest graphical technology, including some unconventional methods that could lead to spectacular results. Single player and multiplayer modes will be available, naturally. A new aspect of the game is the "virtual agent" - these freelance entities can be hired by players, and each provides some unique bonus for its employer. An agent hired by one faction will not be available to the others, and not all agents will be available all of the time. Earth 2160's soundtrack will consist of 30 tracks that respond to the current conditions. The game should be appearing within a month or so.





COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

Codemasters have announced Colin McRae Rally 3 for the PC, to be released around the middle of the year. This game will allow players to play as Colin McRae himself, and will feature the voice of his co-driver, Nicky Grist. It will focus on the Ford Focus RS WRC, but will also feature numerous other vehicles currently in use in worldwide championship rally.

No One Lives Forever expands

Sierra and Monolith have revealed plans to expand the No One Lives Forever franchise. Firstly, as you read this, a huge multiplayer patch for No One Lives Forever 2 should already be available. This patch offers new maps, some based on levels in the single player game, while the rest are original. Weapons have been balanced for multiplayer, and a few new items of equipment have been added. Among the to-be-expected multiplayer modes, Monolith have added the Doomsday mode, wherein teams search a level for all three parts of a doomsday device, at which point they win the round; this is an expansion on the capture-the-flag concept. Monolith are also planning to release a fully documented, full-feature editor for NOLF2, allowing for the creation of mods. Lastly, later this year will see the release of an expansion pack for NOLF2. Interestingly enough, rather than playing the heroine of the original game, Cate Archer, the player will direct the actions of a H.A.R.M. operative, and the focus will be on full-out action rather than stealth.

BULLETPROOF MONK

The game rights to the upcoming John Woo film Bulletproof Monk have been acquired by Empire Interactive. The game will be developed by Mucky Foot Productions of the UK, and will be released on PC and all leading console systems later this year.

NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

Seems like game developers are running out of good ideas. JoWooD's upcoming Neighbours From Hell will have players doing their utmost to make their neighbours' life a misery while dodging their watchdogs and other such "perils". While the idea is rather original, the concept seems rather bland and forced. The game will be available for PC later this year.

THE SYDNEY MYSTERY

Twilight Software, of Australia, will soon be releasing The Sydney Mystery, an adventure game that requires the player to unravel the mystery behind an uncle kidnapped by members of the criminal underworld. The unusual thing about this game is that it has been developed in its entirety by one man, a certain Brendan Reville. And here we thought that the days of one-man game development were long over!

DISCIPLES 2 "EXPANSIONS"

Strategy First are expanding their Disciple II - Dark Prophecy franchise with the upcoming releases of two new titles, Disciples II: Guardians of the Light and Disciples II: Servants of the Dark. Although named "expansions", these games will not require the original to run; interestingly enough, it will be possible to combine both games, allowing the playing of all four races featured across the two titles. The games will feature new high-level campaigns, new artwork and many other enhancements. Guardians of the Light will be released in May, and Servants of the Dark in June.

/ Empires: Dawn of the Modern World



Stainless Steel Studios are at work on Empires: Dawn of the Modern World. A real-time strategy title, this game will let players play with civilizations ranging from the medieval right through to World War II. It will be published by Activision, though no release date has been suggested as yet.

/ Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided



/ Enclave II



A game titled Enclave II is in development at Starbreeze Studios, and will be available for PC, Xbox, PlayStation 2 and GameCube. The game will feature 10 playable characters, 28 maps and an overhauled combat system. As yet, no release date has been scheduled.

In a recent announcement by LucasArts it was revealed that Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided will not be released in April, as was earlier intended. The online RPG, which is set in the Star Wars universe, will shortly enter the third phase of beta testing after which a new release date will be set. In a statement. LucasArts said, "We've received a good deal of constructive feedback and many positive suggestions that, if executed, will genuinely enhance game play for the hundreds of thousands of players who comprise the community." The statement also explained that the delay will allow the game's designers at Sony Online to get additional feedback from the testers and fan base.

►Web Score:	Impossible Creatures	Unreal II The Awakening	Command & Conquer Generals
How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews			
NAG /100	72	76	85
www.gamespy.com /100	72	76	82
www.gamespot.com /10	7.9	7.3	8.9
www.pc.ign.com /10	8.3	8.2	9.3



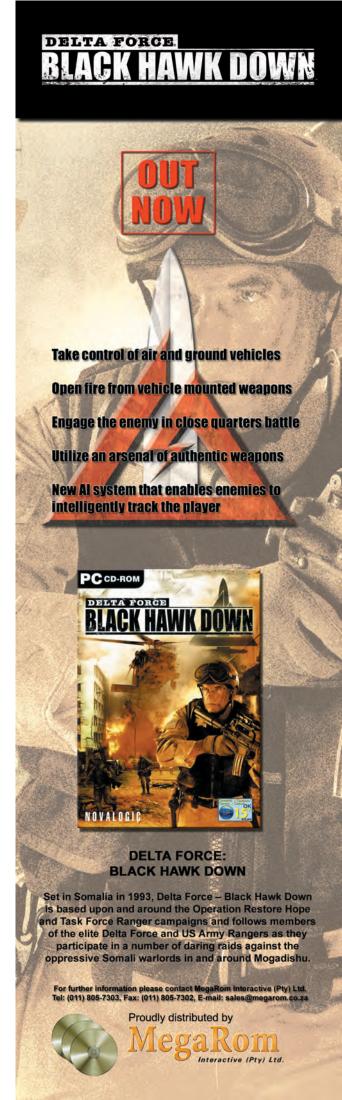
/ Drake

Drake is a cel-shaded third person game being developed by Idol FX for Majesco. Based on an upcoming comic, also called Drake, the story line follows that of a supernatural setting where fast-paced combat and item collection form the basis for the gameplay. Features will include martial-arts skills, special moves, slow motion ability and the use of firearms and swords. Drake is scheduled for release towards the end of the year on PC and Xbox.



International Release Dates

TITLE	GENRE	RELEASE DATE
Blitzkrieg	Strategy	April 1
1914 - The Great War	Strategy	April 1
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	Action	April 1
Red Faction II	FPS	April 7
Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	Strategy	April 8
Aquanox 2: Revelation	Action	April 10
Cold Zero: The Last Stand	Action	April 14
Gothic II	RPG	April 14
Postal 2	FPS	April 14
X-Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge	Action	April 15
Port Royale	Strategy	April 21
Heaven and Hell	Strategy	April 22
Inquisition	Adventure	April 22
Neocron: Dome of York	MMORPG	April 22
No Man's Land	Strategy	May 1
Starsky and Hutch	Action	May 1
Deadlands	RPG	May 1
Lotus Challenge	Racing	May 1
EVE-Online: The Second Genesis	MMORPG	May 6
Harpoon 4	Strategy	May 6
IndyCar Series	Racing	May 6
Rollercoaster Tycoon II: Wacky Worlds	Strategy	May 6
Enter The Matrix	Action	May 15
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Action	May 15
The Sims Superstar	Simulator	May 15
PlanetSide	Action	May 19
F1 Challenge 99-02	Racing	May 19
Rise of Nations	Strategy	May 20
Star Trek: Elite Force II	FPS	May 20
Medieval Total War: Viking Invasion	Strategy	May 20
Breed	FPS	May 27
Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide	RPG	May 27
Disciples II: Guardians of the Light	Strategy	May 27
Galaxy Andromeda	Strategy	May 30
Silent Storm	Tactical	May 30
Call Sign: Charlie	Tactical	June 1
Midnight Club II	Racing	June 2
Moto GP 2	Racing	June 3
Savage	FPS	June 9
Republic: The Revolution	Strategy	June 10
Halo	FPS	June 10
Star Wars: Knights of the old Republic	RPG	June 14



/ F1 Career Challenge



EA's upcoming tentatively titled F1 Career Challenge will provide players with the opportunity to create a rookie driver character to advance through the 1999 to 2002 Formula 1 racing seasons. Naturally, the game will offer the latest in levels of detail and technological sophistication in all its aspects.

F1 Career Challenge is planned for release on all console systems in April or May.

/ Aliens versus Predator: Extinction



Fox Interactive will expand their Aliens vs Predator franchise with the addition of Aliens versus Predator: Extinction, in development at Zono Inc. This title will be a tactical strategy game and will, of course, revolve around the three factions present in the previous AvP games. Each side will have a variety of units to make up squads with, some with special abilities and functions. Xbox and PS2 versions will be emerging around mid-year.

International Release Dates

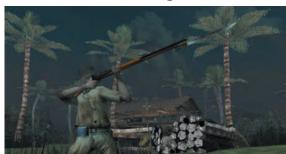
TITLE	PLATFORM	GENRE	RELEASE
Barbarian	Xbox	Action	April 7
Final Fantasy Origins	PSone	Role-Playing	April 8
Inuyasha	PSone	Action	April 8
Midnight Club II	PS2	Driving	April 8
RLH	Xbox	Adventure	April 8
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	PS2	Action	April 8
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Stairway to the Destined Duel	GBA	Strategy	April 15
1080: Avalanche	GC	Sports	April 15
BattleBots	GC	Simulation	April 15
Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride	GBA	Driving	April 15
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	PS2	Action	April 15
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Xbox	Action	April 15
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	GBA	Role-Playing	April 15
High Heat Major League Baseball 2003	GC	Sports	April 15
Ikaruga	GC	Action	April 15
Ninja Five-0	GBA	Action	April 15
Rent a Hero No. 1	Xbox	Adventure	April 15
Robocop	Xbox	Action	April 15
Super Mario Advance 4	GBA	Action	April 15
Twin Caliber	Xbox	Action	April 15
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	PS2 GC GBA	Action	April 15
Ys I & II Eternal Story	PS2	Role-Playing	April 20
Colin McRae Rally 3	PS2	Driving	April 22
Conflict: Desert Storm	GC	Action	April 22
Lufia: The Ruins of Lore	GBA	Role-Playing	April 22
NBA Street Vol. 2	Xbox GC	Sports	April 24
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Xbox	Role-Playing	April 24
Twin Caliber	Xbox	Action	April 30
BattleBots	PS2	Simulation	April 30
Big Mutha Truckers	GC	Driving	April 30
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	GC Xbox	Driving	April 30

/ Futurama



SCi are currently busy developing a game for Xbox, PS2 and GameCube based on the television show Futurama, to be released toward midyear. There will be four characters to choose from, and the game will be a third-person action game that will also include elements of puzzle solving. The TV show's voice talent will provide the in-game voices.

/ Medal of Honor Rising Sun



A console-only Medal of Honor game, Rising Sun, is in development at Electronic Arts. Set in the Pacific theatre during World War II, this game will feature a co-operative mode that will allow two players to play through the campaign together. Medal of Honor: Rising Sun will be available for Xbox, PS2 and GameCube late this year.

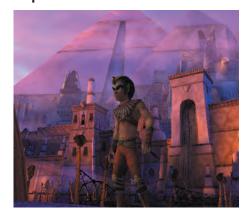








/ Sphinx





Currently under

development at Eurocom Entertainment Software, Sphinx is a characterbased action adventure set in ancient Egypt. THQ will be publishing this one, and it should be available toward mid-year.



THE SIMS FOR XBOX AND GAMECUBE

Maxis and Edge of Reality are working together on the upcoming Xbox and GameCube versions of The Sims. The game will feature support for two players playing either cooperatively or competitively. The game is expected to be ready toward mid-year, to be published by Electronic Arts.

NINTENDO'S PLAYER'S CHOICE RANGE

Nintendo have launched their Player's Choice range for the GameCube. The first titles to be marketed under this value label include Super Smash Bros Melee, Luigi's Mansion and Pikmin. Nintendo recently began bundling various titles with their GameCube consoles, and this latest move reinforces this strategy.

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON FOR XBOX

In April Infogrames will release a version of RollerCoaster Tycoon for the Xbox. This version will include the original title's content, as well as all the features released in the Corkscrew Follies and Loopy Landscapes add-on packs.

ONLINE PS2 TITLES

Sony Computer Entertainment have named some of their upcoming titles that will make use of their online gaming service. These include Syphon Filter Online, Online Bomberman, Resident Evil Online, Breaker, SOCOM US Navy Seals and Arc the Lad On-Line, as well as some EA Sports titles.

LEGO BIONICLE GAME

Argonaut Games are currently developing an action-adventure game based on LEGO's Bionicle range of toys. The game will be released for PC, Xbox, PlayStation 2 and GameCube later this year. Electronic Arts will handle publishing and distribution.

RESERVOIR DOGS

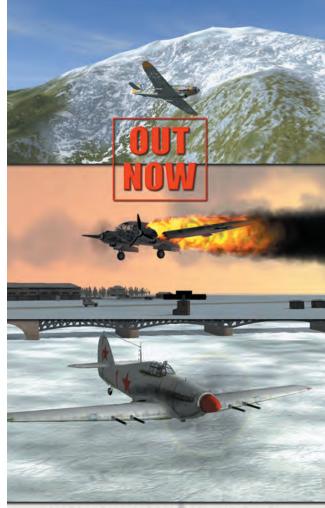
SCi Games Limited have acquired the license for Quentin Tarantino's film Reservoir Dogs. Players will be able to choose from any of the film's main characters, and the game will support both single- and multiplayer modes. The game is being developed for Xbox and PlayStation2.

NEW SUPERMAN GAMES

Based on the animated television series The New Superman Adventures, two games are on their way from Infogrames under their Atari brand. Superman: Shadow of Apokolips (for GameCube) and Superman: Countdown to Apokolips (for Game Boy Advance) should both be appearing even as you read this.

Fox and Vivendi make a deal

Fox Interactive and Vivendi Universal Games have closed a licensing agreement that will empower the latter to produce games based on various Fox film and television properties. Among the first wave of games to result from this deal will be Buffy the Vampire Slayer 2 for Xbox, The X-Files: Resist or Serve for Xbox and PS2, a driving game based on The Simpsons, Die Hard: Vendetta (PS2) and The World's Scariest Police Chases 2 (PS2).



And this time make sure you 'Finnish' the job!



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

This 100% rated new flight simulator includes new campaigns set in the Finnish and Hungarian fronts. New single and multiplayer missions as well as several new playable and Al controlled Russian, German and British aircraft have also been added.

Rated 100% by www.mygamer.com

For further information please contact MegaRom Interactive (Pty) Ltd. Tel: (011) 805-7303, Fax: (011) 805-7302, E-mail: sales@megarom.co.za



/ Fallout



Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel is Interplay's upcoming fallout title for Xbox and PlayStation 2, with a storyline set just after events in the PC game Fallout. This title should be ready in time for the Christmas season.

/ Rise to Honor



Sony's Foster City studio are at work on Rise to Honor, an action fighting game that is being produced with Jet Li's assistance. Li is providing motion capture for the game, which will be released toward the end of the year.

/ The Hobbit



Originally intended for Game Boy Advance, Sierra
Entertainment's The Hobbit will appear on PC, Xbox,
PlayStation 2 and GameCube as well. The format of the
game will be third-person action/adventure, and it
should be out late this year.

/ Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee



Infogrames and Atari have revealed that Godzilla: Destroy
All Monsters Melee, already extant on the GameCube, will
also become available for the Xbox toward mid-year. The
Xbox version will include some new features, including the
Vortaak home world, music ripping, improved visuals and
multiple save files for four players. The numbers include
the following: ten arenas, ten monsters and at least five
game modes. Other enhancements will include upgraded
Al, revamped controls and a single-player Destruction
mode. It is currently under development at Pipeworks

/ International Superstar Soccer 3

Konami's Osaka team is currently busy developing International Superstar Soccer 3 for the PS2 and GC. Featuring an arcadestyle game dynamic, this game introduces a close-up mode that allows a player to view a team member approaching the opposition's penalty area from behind, allowing for more accurate scoring attempts. A points system will allow players to unlock new content, such as new trick moves and stadiums.



/ Backyard Wrestling

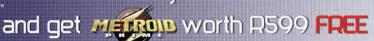
Backyard Wrestling is in development at
Eidos, for release mid year, and depicts the
unorthodox wrestling action of the samenamed shows in America. While in most
other regards it is a wrestling game in
every respect, one unusual aspect of the
control system is that there is no block
function, but rather opposite strikes will
often clash, so essentially you strike to
block - offence is the best defence, they
sav!



How NAG reviews compare to	Mortal Kombat DA [PS2]	Kelly Slaters Pro Surfer [PS2]			Buffy the Vampire Slayer [Xbox]		
internet site reviews NAG /100	85	81	93	80	88	91	
www.ign.com /10	8.6	8.9	8.5	4	8.2	9	
www.gamespot.com /10	8.1	8	7.8	3.8	8.3	8.3	
www.gamespy.com /100	81	89	9.1	n/r	85	82	



SA's most powerful console now only **R1999**







FINAL FANTASY FUTURE PLANS

Square have announced that it is very unlikely that a Final Fantasy X-3 or any such will be produced. Furthermore, being the first Final Fantasy game that is an actual sequel, players should expect X-2 to be quite a different experience to previous titles. As for Final Fantasy XII - it is already in development.

GOBLIN COMMANDER: UNLEASH THE HORDE

Ron and Chris Millar, formerly of Blizzard and both involved in the development of Diablo, WarCraft and StarCraft, are heading up a design team at Jaleco that is developing Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde. This strategy title is expected to be released on consoles near the end of the year.

HALO 2 DELAYED

Bungie have announced that Halo 2 will not be released this year, despite previous scheduling. The company stated that they intend to make the game as good as possible, and will not compromise its quality by rushing it out before the Christmas season. Early glimpses will, however, be provided at this year's E3.

DIE HARD FOR PS2

Under development at bits Studios, Fox Interactive's Die Hard: Vendetta for the PlayStation 2 will feature a number of enhancements over the GameCube version. These number, among others, the inclusion of multiplayer support, a refined auto-aim system and enhancements and changes to the control interface and physics of the

ONIMUSHA

Capcom are working on two Onimusha games. The first, Onimusha Buraiden, will be released in Japan in November, and will feature characters from all the Onimusha games. The other, Oniomusha 3, will be released in March 2004 and will feature two characters - a traditional sword-swinging hero and a modern-day gun-toting Frenchman, and will take place in two time periods - 1582 Japan and 2004 France.

BIGWORLD ONLINE TECHNOLOGY

Micro Forté have, for the past four years, been developing an integrated engine for large-scale online games. Named BigWorld, this engine consists of both graphics and networking functionality. The graphical elements are cutting-edge, incorporating full morphing capabilities, lip-syncing and level-of-detail controls, as well as a material tracking system that allows objects to be rendered as realistically as possible. The network engine can support up to 4 million players without the need to shard the world into separate servers. BigWorld requires no zoning and can transition seamlessly from exterior to interior environments. Microsoft will be using BigWorld in an as-yet undisclosed upcoming Xbox game.

SPLINTER CELL GIMMICKS

Ubi Soft's upcoming Splinter Cell for GameCube and Game Boy Advance will incorporate certain nifty gimmicks and extras when the two versions are connected to each other. The GBA version will enjoy five additional levels if connected to the GameCube version. The GameCube version will benefit in a more spectacular fashion the GBA will act as a remote control for various of Sam Fisher's in-game gadgets. These two versions will be released in America in early May and in Europe a month hence.

350,000 XBOX LIVE SUBSCRIBERS

Since Xbox Live was launched last November, the service has attracted over 350 000 subscribers worldwide. The recent launch of the service in Europe should mean that this figure will climb even higher in short order.

GTA4 CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN

Development has started on Grand Theft Auto 4 at Rockstar North. Rumour has it that this project is being implemented for next-generation consoles (such as PlayStation 3), though it is hard to say how they can be developing for a system that does not yet exist.

REDEMPTION

Toward the end of the year, Xbox owners will be able to enjoy High Voltage Software's upcoming Hunter: The Reckoning: Redemption, from Vivendi Universal Games and Interplay. The game will be based on White Wolf's traditional role-playing game set in the World of Darkness, which teems with werewolves, vampires and the like.





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/ "Dewiring" the desktop



Microsoft's new Bluetooth wireless desktop connects a keyboard and mouse to a PC without using wires, and also allows up to 7 other Bluetooth devices to also connect at the same time. Other than that, the setup is sleek and has a metallic finish with chrome accents.

/ WormCam for Game Boy



Nyko have released a nifty little camera addon for the Game Boy Advance. The unit can store up to 20 images, allows editing of photos on the handheld console itself, and has an unusual feature - it can be triggered by its built-in motion sensor. www.nyko.com

/ Office in your lap



The Laptop Desk Original from LapWorks is an ingenious device that allows one to deploy a small desk on one's lap. The unit provides space for a laptop computer and a mouse, as well as a cell-phone. Besides the ergonomic advantages it offers, the device allows for better cooling of the computer, reducing cooling fan power consumption by 8% - 10%, and stops users getting "hot leg" from protracted mobile computer usage. www.lapworksinc.com

/ Olympia Soundbug



The Soundbug is an unusual device - a small speaker system that attaches to any surface and uses it as a sounding board. Although a clever concept, it does not deliver top-quality sound, as not all materials are ideal for sound reproduction, but it does offer a versatile portable sound system ideal for mobile setups. www.soundbug-us.com

/ Ellula Hot Air inflatable speakers



Ellula's brightly coloured, inflatable speakers aren't just funky and cool looking, their plastic skin also acts as a resonating surface, apparently giving you richer sound with more bass. Being inflatable means they can deflate, thus rendering them ultraportable for those on-the-go music lovers. They feature 10 Watt RMS, power volume control, are magnetically shielded and stand 9.4 inches high. They can be used with a Portable CD, Minidisc, MP3, Cassette player MINI HIFI and Portable TV, PC, Mac, Laptop, and Game Boy Game Consoles. www.ellula.com

/ MP3 Key Drives



Key drives are the latest and fastest drives for carrying around loads of data. These ones are especially funky as they also double as MP3 players, so now you can lug all your important documents about on a gizmo small enough to fit on a key chain, plug in the headphones (included of course) and get on down to your favourite tunes at the same time. They come in 64MB and 128MB versions, and are an end to pockets stuffed with clunky media, just a portable drive the size of a magic marker full of music, brilliant and instantly indispensable.



Xbox Controller S

Microsoft has opened a poll on www.xboxcom for gamers to choose what colours they would like their Xbox Controller S units to be. The winning colours will be unveiled during E3 on May 14.

NDL Announces GameBryo

Numerical Design Ltd. will shortly announce a new graphics engine and toolkit called Game Boy. The technology is based on the company's successful

NetImmerse software used in games such as Dark Age of Camelot, Star Trek: Bridge Commander, and Freedom Force. GameBryo will be compatible with the GameCube, PC, PlayStation 2, and Xbox.

Splinter Cell PS2 Controller

Thrustmaster have announced the release of a gamepad specifically designed for the PlayStation 2 version of Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell. The gamepad will look identical to a standard

PlayStation 2 controller but will sport the official Splinter Cell logo and phosphorescent mini-sticks and buttons.

PlayStation 2 Production to China

Production of the PlayStation 2 will be moved entirely to China in the next fiscal year, benefiting from low labour and parts procurement costs in China. Manufacturing will move to Hon Hai Precision Industry and Asustek Computer.

/ PenClic Mouse





Mouse has been ergonomically designed by a doctor to reduce the strains associated with prolonged use of a computer mouse. It is lightweight and allows all normal mouse functions while the user's forearm rests on the desktop in a natural manner.





V

/ Cordless Xbox controller

Logitech have released their Cordless Controller for the Xbox console, a unit that is remarkably efficient in terms of its power usage, and has an effective range in excess of 7 metres. Impressively enough, up to 8 of these can be used in a confined area without any interference between the units, and with the obvious advantage of keeping the room cable-free. Using 2.4GHz cordless radio frequency technology it has been developed specifically for the demands of the gaming environment. This gives gamers complete freedom of movement anywhere in a room while also eliminating the "line-of-sight" problems encountered with other cordless gamepads. It features the standard Xbox button layout, with an 8-way D-pad and analog pressure-sensitive buttons and triggers, dual vibration feedback, as well as proprietary power management circuitry with a 50+ hour battery life (with vibration). If the controller goes out of range, or if it has not been used for more than five minutes, it goes into "sleep mode," saving a significant amount of battery life. Press any button, and the controller powers back on and is again ready for action. The receiver includes two module slots for memory cards, a headset or other accessories.

Microsoft strikes Creative media chord

Microsoft has announced plans to develop a portable media player based on their media player platform. The Media2Go-based portable players, using Intel Xscale processors, can store more than 8,000 music files, 175 hours of digital quality video or up to 30,000 photographs. It can also provide continuous video playback for up to six hours and continuous music playback for up to 12 hours. "The Media2Go concept has struck a chord with consumers because it allows them to enjoy their digital music, photos and video in a way that no single device has been able to offer so far," said Todd Warren, general manager of the Embedded Appliance and Product Group at Microsoft. The portable players will be available in stores by late 2003.





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/ iCEBOX CounterTop



The iCEBOX CounterTop brings all your favourite

entertainment options together in one charming, easy-to-use device specifically designed for the kitchen. Some of the features include Slot-loading DVD/CD Drive; 2 Type II PCMCIA Slots; Touch Screen with Stylus; Television; DVD and CD Player; Internet; Home Video Monitoring; FM Radio; Washable, Wireless Remote and Keyboard.

Www.icebox.tv

/ Ultra Cordless Optical Suite



Gyration's Ultra Cordless Optical Suite is

a wireless mouse and keyboard solution with a difference. The emphasis of this kit is on portability, and thus it comes equipped with a compact keyboard carrying 88 keys. The accompanying mouse is unusual in that, using gyroscope technology, it can be used in mid-air, without the need for a surface. This takes some getting used to, but is apparently a fairly precise method once the knack of it is mastered. This kit is best suited to non-desktop applications, such as controlling a home theatre system or delivering presentations.



/ Wireless Internet on a chip

Intel have developed the first wireless-Internet-on-a-chip technology. This chip, Intel® PXA800F cellular processor, which combines key elements of computing and cellular communication, will allow the development of devices that, to date, have only appeared in science fiction. For example, communicators such as Dick Tracy's watch and the lapel pins of Star Trek will soon become possible, among a whole slew of other possible applications.

/ Griffin PowerMate



The PowerMate is a very simple and yet highly

useful USB controller device made of high quality machine aluminium. It is much akin to a volume control on a hi-fi system, and functions in a similar function. Being an analogue device, it is perfect for anything from volume control during music playback to scrolling through documents, web pages and more. For total versatility, the unit is programmable, and can emulate scroll controls and the like in any application. PowerMate makes editing home movies a breeze and it comes preset to work with iMovie and FinalCut Pro right out of the box. It also works with iTunes. Internet Explorer. Windows Media Player, WinAMP, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Office (incl. Word & Excel). Adobe Premier, and most other applications using keycommand combinations. It sells for approximately \$44.99.

/ ER2 Personal Robot



The ER2 Personal Robot has been designed to help you be more secure.

assist you and entertain you, and help your kids do better in school.

The ER2 robot uses computer vision to navigate, see objects, and interact with people, allowing users to perform a wide range of existing applications. And, the ER2's behaviors are expandable through user or third party programs.

user or third party programs.
The ER2 robot employs high power computing on board, as well as wireless networking for both receiving commands, and communication remotely with people and with other robots. The robot has a rich feature set, long battery life, automatic self-recharging, and is highly maneuverable because of its vision-based navigation system.

www.evolution.com/product/oem/er2/

/ E-D Glasses



In the November 2002 issue we

reviewed the E-D Glasses from GlassEye Computer Technologies. Two important facts were omitted from the review namely that the nVidia drivers weren't used, which had a big impact on the functionality of the glasses and the 3D does work for games, and not for static images only, as stated in the review. Our apologies if this error affected your buying decision in any way.

/ MouseCaster



The MouseCaster is an innovative

PS/2 wheel mouse with a built-in digital radio receiver. It turns your computer into a digital FM radio and allows you to listen to your favourite radio broadcasts on-air without an internet connection. The software enables you to record songs and programs in a variety of formats (MP3, WAV...), and to program the radio's schedule with the Timer function, or even to use it as an alarm clock. You can also pre-set 28 stations and auto-scan the entire scale.





INTEL MOBILE COMPUTING PRODUCTS

Intel have released their latest mobile processor, the Centrino. The chip is available in several speeds, of course, one of them being 1.3GHz. Another mobile computing product from Intel is Connexion, an Internet connectivity system for aircraft. A server on the aircraft connects to the Web, allowing portable users to carry out any normal Internet functions.

HANDHELD GAMING

Nintendo have officially announced that they are, indeed, busy working on the next generation of hand-held gaming device, to succeed the Game Boy Advance. Rumour has it that the unit may feature an ATI graphics processor, but this is as yet unconfirmed.

HIGH-CAPACITY STORAGE AND PIRACY

Sony's latest data storage system can place 30 hours of music onto a single CD, while Philips' current offering can squeeze 100 hours on a blank DVD, to be played back on a new portable DVD player. The music industry is up in arms about these developments, as they see the threat of piracy increasing. Unfortunately, without halting progress, this kind of thing will happen every time a new breakthrough in data storage is made.

LITHTECH EVOLVING

LithTech have changed their name to Touchdown Entertainment, and are expanding their core competencies to include support for the Xbox, and are offering a new multiplatform game development suite for all next-generation consoles, named Copperhead.

LOGITECH PS2 PERIPHERALS

Logitech are releasing a new USB keyboard and optical mouse for use with the PlayStation 2. The units will be competitively priced, and will complement the console's controller for people who need more versatility. Another new product is the USB Headset, which features Voice-over-IP.

EARLY PS3 RELEASE?

Some rumours making the rounds have it that Sony may be releasing the PlayStation 3 two years ahead of schedule. Although it is generally quite rare for something in the computing industry to complete its full development that early, Sony have always marketed their consoles aggressively. If the rumours are true, the new console may be available in Japan by mid-year. All this, of course, assumes that Cell, the processor to be used in the PS3, is ready by then.

NEW ATI GRAPHICS CHIPS

ATI have announced three new Radeon models, the 9800, 9600 and 9200. These new chipsets will be available from April, and all improve on previous models, and outperform the best of NVIDIA's stock at the moment. Expect to see detailed reviews of boards based on these chips soon.

NEXT WINDOWS AND GAMING

Microsoft's next version of Windows, currently code-named Longhorn, will include many gamer-friendly enhancements. It seems that Microsoft are emphasising this aspect, knowing how important the gaming market is in terms of operating system sales. Microsoft wish to simplify the purchasing process, and so wish to institute a tiered system rating scheme, whereby a machine will be rated, while games will carry a minimum machine rating as a system requirement.

In order to simplify gaming, Microsoft intend Longhorn to allow games to be run off a CD or DVD, much the way that console games operate. Furthermore, drivers are expected to become transparent to the user, so that lengthy, messy downloads get taken care of in the background by the system; patching of software will be handled in a similar fashion.

Microsoft also wish to introduce a controller standard for game pads for use with a PC, to stimulate certain game genres. Central to Microsoft's strategy is online gaming, and so Longhorn will be designed to simplify its use and make it more accessible.

New audio software from Creative

The next generation of Enhanced Audio Extension, or EAX, has been released. EAX 4.0 introduces new functions for developing 3D audio environments, as well as adding new effect filters. Another new technology from Creative is the Interactive Spatial Audio Composition Technology (ISACT) which allows one instance of sound content to be applied to any surround sound system configuration, allowing the same stream to be used for, say, 2.1 sound and 5.1 sound. The system calculates the sound as a continuous environment, rather than breaking it up into separate channel streams.





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Trying to put a feature like this together is a mammoth task - wading through piles of press packs, referring to mental notes of games we have already seen and seeing new development projects all need to be taken into account, of course, just adding to the complication of the matter. But the toughest of all is restricting our choices to a mere fifty. There certainly will be folks out there who feel we left out a title or two, but this is how we see gaming in 2003. You may notice a few interesting inclusions here, as well as the sure-win titles...

THE MOVIES

Publisher: Activision | Developer: Lionhead Q4 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

Another inspirational idea from Peter Molynuex. Create your own film, and become a movie mogul, but before you get to the end product you have to build your own sets, get a script writer, hire and fire actors, find a director, promote the film and make loads of money - all beginning on a very tiny budget.

HIGHLAND WARRIOR

Publisher: Novalogic | Developer: Soft Enterprises Q2 - PC

This one sneaks in due to the fact it has some superb looking graphics, along with some epic looking battles. Go back a few hundred years and watch the Bannockburn battering, together with some impressive hand-to-hand fighting! RTS at its best.

ocal distributors

who's who?

Who is releasing what in SA...

Comztek - Blizzard | Fox Interactive | Sierra | Universla | Majesco | Black Label Electronic Arts - EA Sports | EA Games | Westwood | Lucas Arts | Lionhead Studios MegaRom - Activision | NovaLogic | Take 2 Infogrames | Codemasters | Ubi Soft | Bethesda

Microsoft SA - Microsoft | Xbox Nintendo SA - GameCube | Game Boy Advance

Ster Kinekor - PSOne | PlayStation 2 WWE - CDV | Rage | Empire | SCI | Midas Montecristo | Sold Out [budget] | Xplosiv [budget]

Publisher: Ubi Soft | Developer: Crytek Studios Q4 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

German developer Crytek's heavily scripted tactical shooter offers some of the most lush environments seen to date. Many who have seen their early demo are saying it's the only potential Doom-killer around (with regards to technology). The game features amazing jungle settings with some devious tasks to overcome - not suitable for an itchy trigger finger however...

> Publisher: Ubi Soft | Developer: Ubi Soft Q2 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

XIII is billed as the first Cel-Shaded FPS, a game that will engage gamers in an epic conspiracy. With its comic strip cartoon looks, players have to unravel clues behind the story's compelling and mysterious events. XIII includes themes of amnesia (along with flashbacks), in which players must uncover sinister plots against themselves.

FAR CRY

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

Publisher: Lucas Arts | Developer: The Collective Q2 - PC | Xbox | PS2

Indy's back in full glory, doing what he does best. A third person action romp will see hand-to-hand combat and a lot more visual detail whilst in combat!

COMMANDOS 3

Publisher: Eidos Interactive | Developer: Pyro Studios Q3 - PC

The Spanish developer is presently working on the third instalment of this excellent strategy series. Whilst the first was too hard and the second improving everything, Commandos 3 will have a better interface and plenty more innovative strategic ideas!

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

Publisher: Codemasters | Developer: Codemasters May 2003 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

This eagerly awaited rally title will feature much-improved cars, more

decision making and even more details. The main







championship game is a gruelling series of races across eight international rallies: Japan, Spain, USA, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Australia and the UK are all included, offering tarmac, gravel, dirt, and rain-soaked road surfaces.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2003

Publisher: Codemasters | Developer: Blade Int. Q2 - PC | Xbox | GC

If you like your balls resting on the green baize then look no further than this latest rendition. Snooker may not be that popular but with its 3D presentation, pixel perfect shot making, over 20 of the finest players, as well as pool and crowd effects, this is certainly the business.

IMPERIUM GALACTICA III: GENESIS

Publisher: CDV | Developer: Philos Labs Q2 - PC

A space epic, story-based, single player strategy game. Starting in 2040, you are in control of the fleet of a multinational concern fighting a rivalling concern. The discovery of foreign technology leads to expeditions into space. When you return to Earth you find it occupied by Aliens. Only one colonising spaceship with humans escaped. The beginning of your task is to find this ship. This one is promising much...

HALO COMBAT EVOLVED

Publisher: Microsoft | Developer: Gearbox Software 2004 - PC | Xbox

Initially developed for Xbox by Bungie Studios, Halo: Combat Evolved is a science-fiction first-person shooting game that takes place on a mysterious alien ring-world. The PC adaptation is being developed by Texas-based Gearbox Software and is based on the game's original concept. Let's hope there are a few more additions to this unique game universe.

YAGER

Publisher: THQ | Developer: Yager Development Q3 - PC | Xbox

This is a 3D action, genre-busting game with adventure, air combat and gripping campaigns. Yager captures your imagination as you battle for your life in tomorrow's hostile skies. But is all what it seems? Keep your wits about you, and use what you learn, as your struggle evolves into a fight against constitutional power, conspiracy and controlling forces.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Publisher: SCI | Developer: Pivotal Games Q3/4 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

Can the game come anywhere close to the classic film? The action mirrors the best bits from the film as you control one of the cast members. Everyone thinks of Steve McQueen in the chase / escape scene over the fields, which is included in the 21 levels through planning to the actual escape!

APOCALYPTICA

Publisher: Konami | Developer: Konami Q2 - PC

Action set in the future where Earth is little more than a burnt cinder. Players must battle their way through a series of arenas in fights to the death with CPU or human opponents.

Viewed in the third person, players have access to armaments and use cunning, stealth and high velocity weapons.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

Publisher: Konami | Developer: Konami April 2003 - PC | Xbox | PS2

A superb title benefiting also from five new 'Snake Tales' wherein the Solid Snake character comes to the fore in a series of all-new missions, while both Raiden and Snake are put through their paces in over 500 missions, designed to test their assorted stealth, combat and weapons handling skills.

GHOST MASTER

Publisher: Empire Interactive | Developer: Sick Puppies Q3/4 - PC | Xbox | PS2

This UK development team headed by Australian, Greg Barnett (formerly of Discworld fame) have put together some weird and wacky ideas in a so-called management game with evolutionary gaming - claims Greg. Think God game mixed with The Sims and add some spook factor and a bucket load of other odd ideas!

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Publisher: Take2 Games | Developer: 3D Realms Q3/4 - PC

We're led to believe that his is the mother of all shooters...? It's been a long time in development and who knows if it will even







appear in 2003 but the pedigree of the team behind the game and the fact that Duke Nukem has a descent history means we can't overlook this FPS.

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

Publisher: THQ | Developer: Revolution Software Q4 - PC | Xbox | PS2

Another title that has had its deadline constantly shifted but we are sure it will be worth the wait. With fewer and fewer adventure games around, this one will continue the series with more puzzles and intrigue and some clever innovation

that will make it look less like a boring adventure offering.

Gothic II

Publisher: JoWood | Developer: Piranha Bytes Q3 - PC | Xbox

An impressive amount of detail has gone into this German developed RPG. Working on from the original title, this is already looking fabulous. The story continues with more monsters and weird folk - it's all deep, dark and classy, with excellent use of first and third person views.

DUALITY

Publisher: Phantagram | Developer: Trilobite Q3 - PC | Xbox

Cyberpunk/RPG is the theme here with a serious message and deep storyline, along with easy controls and stimulating graphics. There







are two sides to this reality, namely the real space and the cyber space, players will experience the same timeline through the eyes of three different characters.

PLANETSIDE

Publisher: Ubi Soft | Developer: Verant Interactive Q2 - PC





Planetside is a massive multiplayer online first-person action. Both team-

minded players, as well as independent rogues, are going to find a place within this game, which represents the culmination of years of work. Assume the roles of mercenaries that reside in a distant galaxy where little semblance of law exists.

CHROME

Publisher: Strategy First | Developer: Techland

Q3 - PC

Another first person adventure shooter, with an incredible amount of organic settings - take on the role of Bold Logan, a mercenary running away from a murder he didn't commit (yeah, sure). The game features a range of driving vehicles, as well as an awesome set of weapons. There will be a 32 way multiplayer option!

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

Publisher: Eidos Interactive | Developer: Elixir Studios 02 - PC



Peter Molynuex's own apprentice heads this project, as he breaks free to make







pots of money on his own. A fix of cerebral and deep ideas (will they work?) in this so called awesome RTS set in an Eastern block community. Be a religious leader and rule the state. This could be huge!

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

Publisher: Take2 Games | Developer: Illusion Softworks Q3/4 - PC



If this improves on the brilliant original title it will break new ground.

It's WWII and you are placed right in the middle of the action in this tactical shooter. Loads of missions, plenty of varied tasks and attention to the smallest detail is offered. Are you a SAS hard nut who can win the day or just another John Doe waiting to fill up a body bag?

TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS

Publisher: Eidos | Developer: Core Design October - PC | PS2

Will this just be more of the same or something special - exploration, puzzles, confrontations, action and cavorting around are all on offer. A convoluted story about going to Paris to help a friend find a painting soon turns into a lot more than was initially observed.

INDY RACING LEAGUE INDY CAR

Publisher: Codemasters | Developer: Codemasters Q2 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC



14 tracks, 27 cars and 15 actionpacked races, all in U.S. TV-style







presentation with a fully authentic Indy 500 mode featuring the spectacle and excitement of the most attended single-day sporting event in the world. Make it through Bump Day to compete as one of the drivers and race 500 miles on the world-famous Brickyard circuit.

LOCK ON: MODERN AIR COMBAT

Publisher: Ubi Soft | Developer: SSI Q3/4 - PC

Get into the cockpit of a world-class fighter plane. Each aircraft is rendered in exceptional detail and performs just like its real world counterpart. Players can choose from eight U.S. and Russian jets that range from tank killing A-10 Warthogs and ground-pounding Su-25 Frogfoots to air superiority fighters like the F-15C Eagle and the Su-27 Flanker.

PERIMETER

Publisher: TBA | Developer: K-D Lab Q3 - PC

An interesting title from Russia - a RTS strategy built on the concept of non-stop terra-forming. The gamer will embark on territory seizure by means of specially designed units thus turning it into the principal energy resource. Terraforming a planet sounds crazy but it all looks plausible, bringing new and inventive ideas to the genre.

STUNTS: FINAL STAGE

Publisher: TBA | Developer: Mayhem Studios Q3 - PC

Lots of interest in this Geoff Crammond inspired game. With focus on physics and top notch AI, this is a very interesting arcade game in the making from the Slovac team. The concept is neat and with the backing of a top publisher this could turn out to be one of the surprise titles for 2003!

SEA DOGS 2

Publisher: Ubi Soft | Developer: Akella Q2 - PC | Xbox

Pirates - don't you just love them? Ahoy there. More action and intrigue on the high seas in this colourful RPG. Now there will be on land and at sea modes, along with some interface changes. Explore and go into combat and be top dog! Don't forget your sick bag.

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Publisher: 3D0 | Developer: 3D0 Studios Q4 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC



Pestilence, war, famine and death have decided to make a visit and you are the

only one capable of stopping them as you protect archangel and his three humans, known as the Chosen. Hand to hand combat, plus many chilling actions are



planned. From the early information we have this one is coming together well!

Homeworld 2

Publisher: Vivendi | Developer: Relic Entertainment

Q4 - PC

RTS at its best - Homeworld brought another dimension to the strategy genre with epic battles and settings. It also didn't take itself too seriously although it was deep and challenging. Homeworld 2 will develop this theme with an even bigger stage and a lot more detail. We can only wonder what it will be but we are eagerly waiting!

Postal 2

Publisher: Whiptail | Developer: Running with Scissors Q3 - PC

The mother of all shooters with an isometric slant - what distinguishes this title, apart from good looks, is the amount of foulmouthed detail. The guys developing this have some good ideas but they should watch the language! Previous title courted controversy.

VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

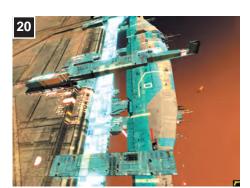
Publisher: Empire | Developer: Deep Red Games Q3 - PC

Take a dash of theme park, mix it with The Sims, add a Casino theme along with management interface and what have you got? The making of a game that sees you build and run your own pixel perfect Vegas gambling complex! Deep Red is the team developing this one.

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

Publisher: Take2 Games | Developer: Rockstar Q3 - PC | Xbox | PS2

The sequel to the awarding winning console title - fast, edge of the seat, driving on both 2 and 4 wheels. Set in LA, Paris and Tokyo with open plan courses. This is illegal driving at its best. Flash cars, flash ideas and splashed pedestrians on the sidewalk!





SOLDNER: SECRET WARS

Publisher: JoWood | Developer: Wings Simulation 02 - PC

Online military tactical first person shooter that has more realism than most - this is a team based game set in the Bering Sea during 2010 when all world powers have decided to fight wars in secret.

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

Publisher: Infogrames | Developer: Lost Toys Q3/4 - PS2 | PSone | Xbox

Already on console it is muted that this is being converted to PC with coverage seen already on the PC development. Battle Engine Aguila is a first person perspective war game that puts the player bang in the middle of an epic, real-time battle being fought between two huge armies.

CURSE: EYE OF ISIS

Publisher: Wanadoo Edition | Developer: Asylum Q3 - PC | PS2 | Xbox

Action come adventure as you play Darien Dane, a troubled young engineer, who is trying to find the Eye of Isis in order to return it to the pyramid where it was originally discovered.

S.T.A.L.K.E.R OBLIVION LOST

Publisher: TBA | Developer: GCS Q4 - PC

3D action, based around the X-Ray engine - an extreme play dynamic of fast and tough combat, where players are to oppose dangerous and wise enemies, a large set of multifarious weaponry, the option to control various machinery, incredible detailing and game world interactivity. The game also features a story driven single player mode, with original team play, plus various other modes.

MASTER OF ORION 3 Publisher: Infogrames | Developer: Quicksilver

Q2 - PC This is the seguel to one of the bestloved strategy games ever - it's not

18



enough to be just a competent economist or a great captain in the armed forces. To succeed, considerable political, administrative and intelligence skills must be applied to craft your civilisation's glorious chapter in the Annals of Time and Space.

MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER

Publisher: Electronic Arts | Developer: Warthog Q3 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC

Set in the future, Mace Griffin, a ranger, becomes a bounty hunter, out to discover a horrible truth. The game utilises the proprietary 'Tusk' engine which allows two key play dynamic innovations - the movement within and between different types of environments, and seamless transitions between first person action and arcade space combat. This one is looking mighty tasty.









TROPICO 2: PIRATE COVE

Publisher: Take2 Games | Developer: Frog City April - PC





Tropico is a RTS 'builder game', where the main way you work on your environment and

improve your status, is by building. That in turn encourages your people to do things... rather than selecting and directing them, you construct things and they react. Your success is gauged on how well you meet their needs. Now here comes the subtle difference. In Tropico, when you built up an economy as a Caribbean dictator, you were building it up primarily to sell products - whether it was rum, corn or whatever, earning money with your exports. Tropico 2 does a 'kind of' reverse on that. The player maintains their wealth not by production of materials, but by plundering merchants on the high seas and bringing the victims back to the island as captive workers. In addition, the pirate characters show a great deal of individual personality, so that the player has a vested interest in the characters' well being. Looking at your island you will find pirates and captives, being treated very differently. The pirates, your allies, plunder - bringing back gold and displaying evil traits. The captives work for you and are captured











CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH Publisher: TBA | Developer: Headfirst Q3 - PC

There are not many horror games that can terrify players with a spooky atmosphere, or even occasionally scare

them witless. The aim of Headfirst is to convey both the dark side of gaming whilst also adding adventure facets. Based on a HP Lovecraft story, they are using his influence to create a genuinely scary atmosphere. The creation of Call of Cthulhu is a fine blend of storytelling and getting the right look. Graphics are vital in creating a good atmosphere, but sound and play dynamic are also important. Headfirst is using photo-realistic textures in an attempt to create a really believable atmosphere, so that the player truly feels immersed in the environment. Within Call of Cthulhu you only get to play one character - he is an ex-cop Private Investigator who is unwittingly dragged into the dark world of the Cthulhu mythos whilst investigating a case. To keep you abreast of events there is the game journal, which is an evolving record of the player's progress through the game - like a diary. It also contains all clues and evidence found, plus it is a record of creatures encountered and places discovered. A lot of Lovecraft's protagonists kept diaries, journals or wrote letters, so



it was thought it was something to be continued in the game. Non-player characters are very important to the player's progression through the game. In addition to being able to talk to them and find out useful information, the player can also get them to perform certain tasks (defending, attacking a target, keeping watch and so on). These characters won't just be cannon fodder in this game.

or kidnapped by your pirates. You will want to keep

they are, the more they will work for you... unless

Although the period in which the game is set was a

this compromise is a small one when you see the

historically bloodthirsty time, it has been a decision to

deliberately keep the violence down to a minimum. But

quality of the presentation - in full 3D with an intuitive

Tropico 2 now has a campaign mode, plus a big push

towards integrating a solid storyline. The whole initial

starting plot is creating a brewery and taverns to drink

in to ensure the buccaneers are happy. This task will

take the player 10 minutes to play and is designed to

familiarise and introduce the player to some important

The campaign is linear comprising around 15 episodes

with unfolding stories starting in 1660, ending 1730.

Also included are famous pirates (from Blackbeard to

Long John Silver) and it's up to you how you play the

game by altering the chosen characters' attributes.

concepts for the game. Success will unlock the next

they try to escape!

them resigned to being your captives - the more afraid

Call of Cthulhu is more about survival than carnage. The player basically is given missions or goals, which they have to complete in order to progress - it's kind of like an adventure with action elements. It will require more thought than your usual FPS game, but the revolver is always there as an option... as well as some interesting spells. The player will learn more and more magic as they progress through the game although performing magic has a detrimental effect on the player's sanity levels. Magic can be used as an offensive tactic (such as the ability to command the dead) or to help with gathering evidence and information (the temporary ability to understand Latin or Arabic for example).

With the tag genre of horror, FPS, adventure, action, -Call of Cthulhu appears to have it all right.



DEUS EX 2: THE INVISIBLE WAR

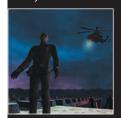
Publisher: Eidos | Developer: ION Q3 - PC | Xbox



Already there has been much speculation about this sequel that blends action with adventuring, as well as RPG character

creation. A team of 20+, based in Austin USA have the mammoth task of creating a title that must live up to some very high expectations. The core design team from the original game is back, but there is a new programming and art team. Dissecting Deus Ex and finding any glaring inadequacies was the team's first task and with all this taken into account there will be improvements targeted towards better Al, a stronger play dynamic, refined physics, more detailed graphics, etc. Considering that the original Deus Ex is viewed as one of the best titles of the year, some say decade, it is a compelling prospect what the sequel could present. Ion is using cutting edge Unreal technology with some radical code enhancements. If drop dead gorgeous graphics are the order of the day then you will not be disappointed, the technology behind the game and the team's expertise ensure that. Licensing the Havok engine will give the game's Al and physics a feel and believability far beyond most people's expectations. The fact that this was the starting point to work from means that the team is craving to push things on even further!

In Deus Ex the player uncovered a massive global conspiracy to bring about an apocalyptic New World Order by spreading disease, social unrest and international conflict and it was up to the player to fight for or against the conspiracy. In Deus Ex: The Invisible War the story takes place 15-20 years later and the events of the first one have led to the collapse of society in general with no one faction in control. During this chaotic recovery period, several religious and political factions see an opportunity to re-shape a worldwide government to their agendas, understanding that the right moves now could determine the shape of human society for decades - even centuries - to come. Amidst the debris, the player Alex D emerges in search of the identities of the true players behind the power struggles and the source of his own mysterious origins. In a techno-nightmare of the fragile revival or ultimate decimation of human civilization, the player takes part in a dark dramatic struggle to raise the world from its own ashes. It all boils down to the player finding out the truth of who they are and their purpose in the world. The environments, locales, and settings are also inspired from the original but will be diverse and interesting, with lots of the unexpected, spanning the whole world. The attention to detail to convey realism will be unsurpassed!







BREE

Publisher: CDV | Developer: Brat Design Q2 - PC

Breed, a cool mix of gaming genres, has been in development for over three years and the pedigree of the design team - small and well formed - should be noted. Both the two main people, owners of the company and programmer and artist, Ed Scio and Jason Gee, were at Psygnosis when the Liverpool company was the number one publisher in the world

To those who might have somehow not seen or read about Breed, it is a sophisticated, polished and cinematic shooter, best summed up by the team's own 100-word press statement.

'A cutting-edge science-fiction shooter, which skilfully blends addictive, accessible, free-roaming game play with cutting-edge, state-of-the-art technology to expand not only the game play potential, but also the player's perceived freedom within the game world. Utilising both 1st and 3rd person viewpoints, players can freely take control of a variety of units and vehicles - from standard ground troops to APCs and Dropships - to do battle with The Breed both in orbit and on the Earth's surface. The

objective is simple: Halt the invasion of The Breed and stop the destruction of mankind.'

A strong backdrop story adds to the overall cutting edge and interest of the game. Placed in the near future, space travel has allowed mankind to venture beyond our solar system to other worlds. Throughout

the ensuing centuries the Earth's over-populated colonies travelled far to colonise worlds in the neighbouring star system but all was not well. The first problem in this mass colonisation was when these established populations found out they were lacking in a defence system and were an easy target being attacked by an aggressive alien race. It's about good versus bad - survival and the breed.

Breed manages to set the right tone and ambiance for an epic game and the overlooked area in most games of late, the sound and music, is catered to the highest standard. With its original and absorbing storyline on offer, its 25 plus missions and campaigns, and a wide variety of playing modes, nothing appears to be lacking. The innovations within the game speak for themselves: Seamless terrain/orbit transition; co-existing real-time battles; shared vehicle control - the list goes on and on but the team's slant on the game's innovations is more direct.

"Breed is innovative in a number of areas. It brings together styles of play from a number of genres into a new type of hybrid game that can't be tied down. How many games have you seen where you can be given orders in a battle room, run the length of a space cruiser,

jump in your fighter, fly down through the atmosphere to Earth, perhaps shoot down a couple of enemy fighters, before landing and then embark on a land mission at the end of which you can get back in your fighter and fly all the way back up to space again?" Story, innovations and technology go hand in hand.









Publisher: Disney Interactive | Developer: Monolith
August 2003 - PC

Disney released the film Tron, nearly 20 years ago and in its way was the Matrix of it's time. It was a tale of futuristic exploits,

and was the inspiration for a number of computer games - including Tron itself - which was a compendium of sub games - speed cycles and discs being two well remembered elements. The problem, which we did not know at the time, was technology in terms of personal computer games, which was still in its infancy - fast forward to present day and in development is Tron 2.0 supported by the latest technology and developed by world renowned Monolith. Tron 2.0 is very action oriented (as with most Monolith games) but mixes ideas to make it pretty unique, although still having the Tron gaming ideas from the original creation. Adventure elements, a strong story, world exploration, character interaction, and some basic problem solving puzzles are a few of the

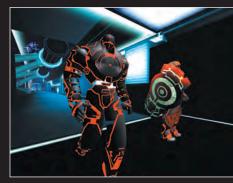


ingredients. Add RPG, the subroutine system, which is basically a very robust inventory system with character building mechanisms that are very contextual to the Tron universe - and you can understand better what is on offer. Players will also be able to alter the abilities of their character in order to play the game better and represent their play style.

Players assume the role of Jet Bradley, a talented, young computer programmer in search of his missing father, Alan Bradley. Delving deep into a strange and chaotic digital world, Jet must confront evil forces that are planning to take over the world's computer systems by using his father's human digitisation technology. The quest leads players through danger-filled action in unbelievable locales. Gamers, armed with an assortment of digital weapons, shields and gadget subroutines, can compete on the legendary Game Grid, contend with deadly programs and circumvent devious obstacles as they travel through some indescribable

settings. In effect you now have a kind of shooter, response action game that looks like someone on acid created it. And there is an interactive surprise every few minutes.

The impressive technical specifications of Tron 2.0 are based around the team using their own Lith's 3D engine, along with both the Jupiter and Triton engines, which are quantum leaps forward from the previous LithTech engine. The rendering has been completely rewritten, as has the physics and the special FX components. One item of note that will make Tron 2.0 (and Triton) stand out is the use of their real-time glow FX on the characters and the world. This has not been seen in any other game and gives Tron 2.0 its distinctly 'powered' look. The new light cycles game, re-designed by Syd Mead (world famous concept designer of the Tron film) lets players race on the Game Grid in third-person perspective and helps build the excitement. Looking for something different - well here it is!



ENTER THE MATRIX

Publisher: Infogrames | Developer: Shiny May 2003 - PC | Xbox | PS2 | GC



The first interesting aspect pertaining to the game is the fact that the concept and storyline is written by the Watchowski

brothers, who brought us The Matrix film. With a mix of gaming ideas - action, fighting, amazing stunts, martial arts, shooting, driving, etc. - it is already being billed as the favourite film-based game of 2003, and will include many actors from the actual films. Enter the Matrix will expand this universe with new and compelling ideas. The story itself is unique in that it tells a tale that's parallel to The Matrix Reloaded, with the two stories intersecting at key moments. In the game, you'll leave one scene and walk right into a scene in the film, and then out again to continue your story. In the weird universe the normal rules do not apply. Offered up are radical effects, and considering the expertise from two sides of the industry - film and video gaming - putting their collective minds together, a lot is expected. At the start of the game, you'll choose to play as either Niobe or Ghost. Niobe is the Captain of the Logos, the fastest ship in the rebel fleet. Ghost is the weapons guru - the Wachowskis describe him as a Zen-Buddhist-Apache-assassin, Both characters are soldiers. Zion, the home of the rebels, faces a new threat, and Niobe and Ghost play a key role in the story that ensues









across the game and the films. Through the game

their skills or unlock different game modes.

dynamic, and the game's hacking system, you'll discover

many secrets that will allow your character to improve

Enter the Matrix is uppermost all about action. This isn't

a stealth game where you creep from room to room and

try not to be discovered. That's just not The Matrix way.

the action. Shiny want the player firing thousands of

With a good deal of time and money going into the

concept other facets of the game get the Hollywood

animation in the game started life as motion-captured

footage, using the actual movie actors and stunt teams.

treatment. For instance, all of the movement and

Master Yuen Wo-Ping, the films' choreographer,

features action in true Matrix style. You control

choreographed all of the fight moves, so the game

characters through fantastic, rule-bending fights, cart

wheeling around the levels, running on walls, dodging

bullets and jumping off walls to deliver flying kicks.

Besides the actors, set designers, costume directors,

teams, etc. have all been utilised making this a true

epic. Expectations are high - can it cut the mustard?

martial arts specialist, choreographers, special effects

Just like the lobby scene in the film, you'll jump right into

bullets and wading through people that try to stop them.

SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

Publisher: Cenega | Developer: Black Element Q3/4 - PC

Little known fledgling publisher and developer, Cenega/Black Element, will make it big with this highly polished third

person shooter, complete with an intriguing background story and a twist in the tale. Once again 'horror' appears to be the flavour for 2003. In a small mountain village somewhere in northern Europe the statue of the Virgin Mary at the local church began to cry bloody tears during a mass for a dead man. The next day the dead man was found 'alive', albeit in a quite extraordinary condition. In the Vatican there is an office that reports directly to the papal tribune called the 'Office for a Doctrine of the Faith'. Its responsibilities are to investigate 'God's miracles'. A recent report chronicles the miracle of the dead man and it is now their task to investigate. The Vatican sends a priest, who reports back some basic information. Communications suddenly stop and it becomes impossible to make contact with him again or with the local pastor, Father Alberto Pinoli. An as yet unnamed private investigator, whose past is shrouded in mystery, is sent to the region. He arrives at the town late in the evening and finds it empty. This is where it starts. The player will be able to visit many eras and will be confronted by various technologies - some advanced, others primitive. Understanding both could be advantageous to your success as you travel from the present to the Middle Ages and back again through a special gate. Other eras will open up as you, the player, progresses in the game. The player does not choose when and where they will travel to, this is done via the

levels and chapters within the game. Each chapter is specific to a period in time. You control what appears to be a normal human with an extended array of common moves but lurking within is a demonic force (this part is at present being kept under wraps). Apparently the demon within the character is growing, along with his power. He can summon the demon within to assist him with his tasks. If the player has enough so-called 'demon-time', which grows with each enemy killed (shown onscreen via an indicator), he may call up the demon by a simple key press. An internally built 3D engine, along with their own set of tools, really shows off the Czech team's expertise and combined with endless special FXs, and a cleverly designed concept, it appears to be a winning formula. Out and out action is not always called for and it could be that what you don't do in certain tight situations will win the day. A mixture of puzzles is also seamlessly added to ensure this is not a mindless gung ho traipse. A full range of weapons, along with a cast of outrageous NPCs presents a visual feast of ideas. Killer looks and an eerie ambience mark this down as one to look out for.





DREDD VS DEATH

Publisher: Vivendi | Developer: Rebellion



Rebellion Soft, a UK developer run and owned by the Kingsley Brothers, is one of the dying

breed of small, perfectly formed, development houses who constantly look for new ideas and still have the entrepreneurial spirit. Although still in its early stages, this dark and bleak futuristic first person shooter based on the 2000AD licence could be the dark horse tip for 2003. An interesting backdrop story will welcome gamers to Mega-City, a city of over four hundred million people and every one of them a potential criminal. Stretching the length of the 22nd century American eastern seaboard, Mega-City One is the most dangerous city on earth; for it is calculated that one serious crime takes place every second of every day. So dangerous, it demands a special breed of law enforcer. Here there are no police, no trials and no juries - only the Judges. It takes fifteen years to train a Judge for life on the streets of Mega-City One. Fifteen years of iron discipline, rigid self-control and concentrated aggression. Most feared and respected of all Judges is Joe Dredd, a man vested with the power of instant sentencing, a man whose courts are the streets and whose word is the Law! Gamers will have the opportunity to play Judge Dredd in Mega-City One where you, with the task of being Judge and jury and executioner, will play it all fair and square - not as a tyrant. Fans of the 2000AD comic strip will have a slight advantage in knowing what to expect and how the Judge will react. Those uninitiated will be given the low down on the Judge but it's pretty simple - be fair, use kid gloves but go after anyone who disobeys the law! Dredd VS Death is split into chapters, which will offer up more than merely cautioning drivers for traffic offences. See through the eyes of Judge Dredd as he patrols the mean streets of the stunningly realised future metropolis. Mega-City One. Plans are also underway to have extensive multiplayer modes, enabling ferocious split screen or online play and will use Rebellion's versatile new Asura engine.





DOOM III

Publisher: Activision | Developer: id Software Q3 - PC



DOOM III, the latest instalment, is one of the most successful franchises in PC gaming history, built on id's revolutionary

new 3D graphics engine. It could easily redefine the genre - although it has a lot to live up to.

What more can be said of this monster (in more than one way) first person shooter that hasn't been chronicled over the last year or so? If killer looks or monsters and creatures of indescribable detail sell games then this is it. Zombies, mythological creatures, cybernetics... you name it, they are included. Looking more like a horror epic in the mode of Resident Evil, this oozes atmosphere that will have gamers focused on their screen with sweating hands tugging at their controls!

Those who were lucky enough to see a 'sneak peak' of the game last year were enthusing over the goriness of the game and the demonic tone it conveyed - all big plus points. As id continues to make dramatic leaps pertaining to their in-house technology the end results are excitingly viewed on screen - certainly expounding vitality and life to a genre of game that generally fails to be innovative. The virtual world offers up not only interiors that drip terror but a massive variety of looks and intricate detail. The settings are not cosmetic, like in many other games, but are focal facets of game play, which add to a strong story line. The use of 'light and shade', along with sound, adds another dimension. The dynamics of creatures as they move, tumble and lurch towards you offers realism and this

new, built from scratch, physics engine is impressive. There is a tendency to forget about actual game play, when, as in this instance, the technical specs make most PC owners drool. New and old monsters are worked on and the weapons on hand will appease even the most violent of players.

Although details are sparse there are a number of exciting 'newbies' on offer, plus some good old fashioned ones to give a no nonsense theme to the action. We are told that the deeper storyline will evoke a broader spectrum of emotions and faced with some of the boss creatures this could be the case, although frustration and exhilaration are two that instantly spring to mind. It's easy to sum this one up as a game that could well meet action gamers' high expectations.



















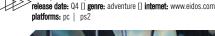
BLACK AND WHITE 2

Publisher: Electronic Arts | Developer: Lionhead Q3/4 - PC





What can you say about any game coming from the mind of gaming genius Peter Molyneux? Not only are his titles innovative but, more importantly, they look absolutely superb and in terms of game dynamics they offer all you would expect and in most cases a lot more. With each new B&W title the team learn more and so the game evolves and improves. For instance, in the original RTS game you saw very primitive villagers all they wanted was food and wood. Their abilities were fairly simple and they did not interact with each other, nor did towns interact. They farmed, reproduced and married. Things have now moved on. They are self-sufficient and feel the pressure and influences of other towns. With this advancement and new technologies come the possibility of war... The whole mix of the game is more involved and far less predictable. Villagers are trading, warring, and as one town becomes too dominant they will find they come under attack. Villagers will also build up armies and will defend their cities. Walls can be built around settlements in order to protect them from opposing warriors and the Creatures of rival Gods. There are now many strategic targets in a town, whilst worshipping is now more localised. Instead of all moving out to a plot of land where the citadel is placed, and risking their lives, there are worshipping sites dotted around. A town can soon become a city with complex walls, lookout towers, etc. The world is chaotic and destructive - much like the world we live in. A great deal of time is being spent on understanding the influences of the towns and how they battle against each other - stopping or creating wars! You still, of course, have a creature but instead of becoming this 'learning agent' that does things for you, it is also your ultimate weapon. If you send this 'King Kong' creature into a town the villagers are going to be worried and feel threatened and shoot arrows at it. It could easily clear a town but villagers could also get it on their side. There are many ploys to take. B&W2 is still relatively early in its development cycle and Lionhead tend to announce some of the most innovative new ideas as the game comes close to release. With this in mind, the game should be something really special. You can take it for granted that improved AI, better interface, improved graphics and engine go without saying! Most sequels are normally lame affairs and although some may live up to the original title none really come as a major improvement but it is looking like B&W2 will. Add to the fact there is now a whole new and impressive feudal system, the people/villagers are more advanced and understand their own basic needs and you are necessitated to do more to impress. As always is the case, religion is one of the catalysts for war. Unite the people, or destroy them. You choose!





developer: core | publisher: eidos | distributor: ster kinekor | [011] 445-7900





TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF

THE

DARKNESS

There seems to be a lot of sniping at Eidos regarding the delayed release of the latest in the Tomb Raider series. Some are saying the team is struggling to get things right and is looking for a hook and better ideas to captivate the public, whilst others are saving Core, the development team, is merely ensuring they get it pixel perfect and there are no fears about this not being another great title. Whichever way you look at it, 3 delays so far mean this will come under even closer scrutiny than any previous Lara Croft offering.

Derek dela Fuente caught up with Adrian Smith, Operations Director at Core, to get a fix on the latest news on Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness (AOD). The one question briefly touched on which Core was eager to answer was - how increasingly hard has it become for the team to write a new game based around Lara Croft? Is it all about ideas, angles, and being even more innovative? Also, do you spend hours ensuring continuity so that people familiar with the ethos of Lara feel they know and understand her?

"If you'd asked me this question after The Last Revelation I would have said yes. With AOD we have gone back to the basics of what made the first game such a success. It's a relatively new team, a new engine, and we've brought in a lot of new elements,

something that we wanted to do for a long time. So for us it is like going back to the first game when we had a very clear vision of what we wanted to do and it was very cutting edge. One misconception about this game is that Lara has become a different person. Admittedly she has got a slightly harder edge but not to the extent that some articles have claimed. Instead what they have done is introduce a darker theme than in previous Tomb Raider games. We wanted to put Lara in situations she has not faced before to see how she reacts. Continuity is essential." It did appear that they (Core/Eidos) didn't think a sixmonth delay could be considered 'long' in this industry. "We want to deliver the best Tomb Raider game ever and by putting the release date back gave us the extra time to help us achieve our goal. We simply weren't prepared

to compromise on quality by rushing the game out for

everv

14th Century Alchemists to serial killers in modern day France. To create something on this scale it was necessary to take ideas and production values from the film industry - in the way they research the subject, the back story they create for their characters, the depth of the visuals. When we wrote this story we wrote a book; AOD is

"The story is very much on an epic scale, from

Christmas."

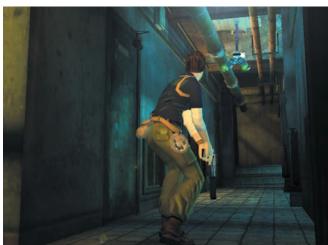
only the first chapter of that book. The game opens a lot of doors, and only closes a few of them."

So it appears Lara has been remolded, even reinvented, but done with a subtle hand. It does appear that

single area of the game's development has been looked at long and hard and this goes right down to the game's all-important technology. Lara Croft has always looked great but possibly the last offering looked slightly stale. With this in mind, expect to see lots more eye candy graphics and be prepared for the 'wow' factor.

"The first Tomb Raider game was revolutionary in terms





of graphics and play dynamic. In the past with previous games we have always been limited by the technology available, however this certainly hasn't been the case with AOD. For a start Lara is now made up of over 5,000 polygons as opposed to just 500 in previous games. The level of animation is breathtaking and the new engine enables some amazing graphical effects for weather, lighting and reflective maps."

The lowest PC specification on this offering is expected to kick in at a minimum of PIII 733 128 Meg Ram, which is very high!

There are many new and interesting features to watch out for. For the very first time in a Tomb Raider game Lara has the ability to talk to characters in the game. You are given choices of how you interact with these characters, the choices you then make will affect Lara's route through the game making the game less linear. You will also need to think more about how you react with NPCs, however there aren't multiple endings; it certainly isn't a 'Deus Ex style' of game. However what

they do have is the ability to affect Lara's route through the game. You must get Lara from A to B, however there are different ways of doing this. For example, in one of the early exchanges Lara needs to speak to Madam Carvier, a colleague of Von Croy. If Lara speaks to Madam Carvier in a certain way, she will receive Von Croy's notebook, which will help Lara through the game. However, if she is dismissive of her then she will have to manage without the notebook and try to locate the notebook another way.

For those not au fait, the game starts in the back streets of Paris, and ends in the hellish depths of Prague. Setting some parts of the game in real-life locations introduces different sorts of challenges for Lara. This is the first Tomb Raider game where Lara can use stealth. At the start of the game Lara must use stealth to avoid detection by the police. She is on the run after being framed for the murder of her former mentor Von Croy and if she gets caught it will be 'game over' for the player.

Another cool implementation is that for the first time in a Tomb Raider game you are able to play as another character - Kurtis Trent. He is an extremely cool character who brings a new dimension to the game as he has his own distinctive moves and play mechanics,

including the terrifying Chirugai blade. There are further plans for Kurtis, however these depend on how well he is received in AOD.

If you list the new ideas and see the direction this game is taking it has more innovations than any of the previous titles and there are lots more as Adrian went on to establish. "A lot of the new features in AOD we have wanted to do in previous games but have been limited by technology. We want to try to keep the game new and exciting by introducing new features that will complement the existing play dynamic but we don't want to move too far away from what the Tomb Raider experience is fundamentally about."

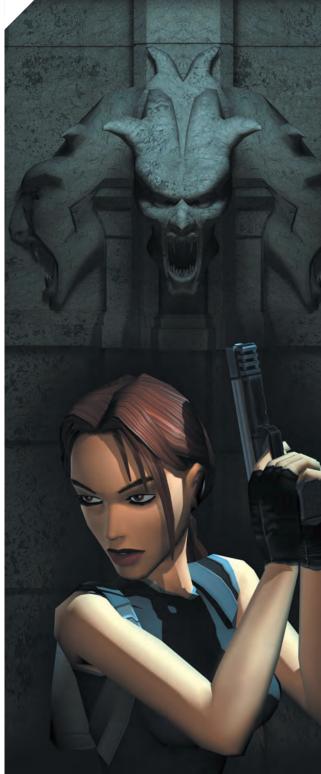
With over 28 million copies sold worldwide of the previous 5 games Eidos already has quite a large captive audience. The aim with AOD is to target the existing fans but also the new gamers who perhaps haven't experienced a Tomb Raider game before. Core aim to achieve this by adding new play dynamic features without alienating existing fans and by producing a shorter more intense gaming experience. The Tomb Raider movie will certainly help bring in a new audience... it has helped project Lara Croft and Tomb Raider well and truly into the mainstream.



































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NAG Award of Merit

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Sly Raccoon [PS2]

"It dares to be different, and that has certainly paid off."



Starfox Adventures [GCN]

"If you're a GameCube owner looking for a fulfilling adventure game done right, you can't go wrong with Starfox Adventures."

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Buffy the Vampire Slayer [Xbox]

"Full of fun and quips, lots of very typical Buffy-esque humour and rollicking action, it is a title that will have the fans calling for sequels." **Shryke**



Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance [PS2]

"Fast paced, with enough of a strategic element in it, this game is sure to please Mortal Kombat devotees...'

NAG Review Rigs supplied by:





SPECIFICATION Intel P 2.0 GHz 512KB Gigabyte P4 845PE ATX Motherboard Leadtek MYVIVO Ti 4600 ViewSonic P90f 19" Monitor TwinMOS 1 GHz RAM DDR 266 Maxtor 60 GB ATA133 7200 HDD AOpen CD ROM AOpen P4 Black Tower Chassis Logitech Cordless Desktop

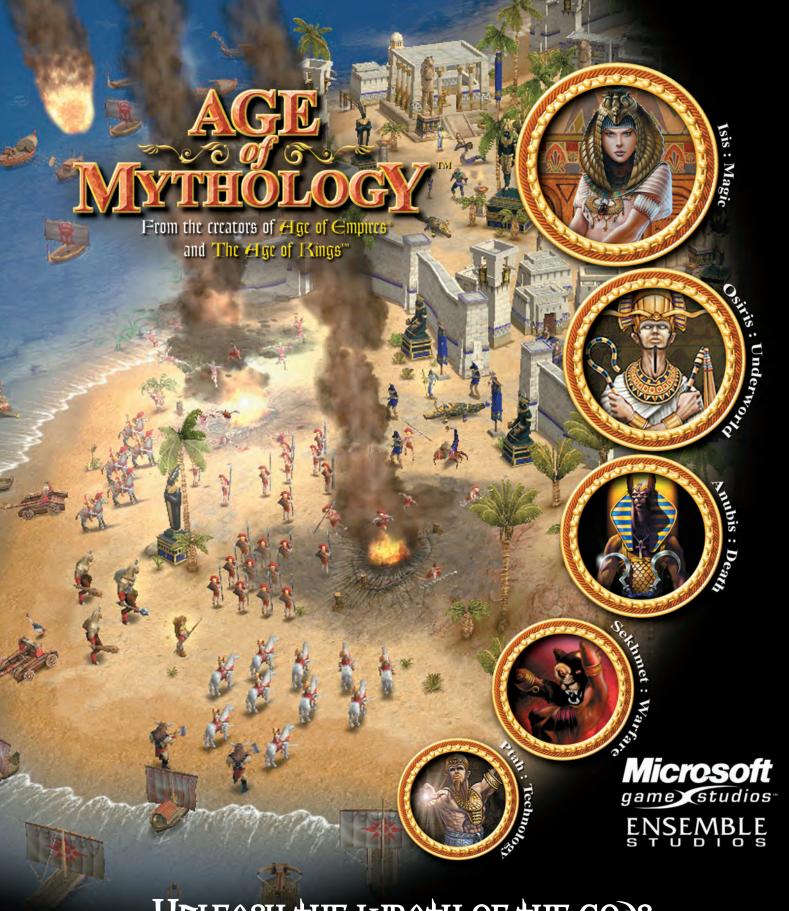












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UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

Unreal II is a victim of its own hype and unlike the first game doesn't do anything revolutionary or add to the genre. In terms of being a sequel it has obviously improved technically but for all the technical gains it scores, it throws the advantage away by offering a trite and clichéd play dynamic and a superior but not revolutionary graphics engine. The first game had a number of advantages going for it, it had atmosphere, unique ideas, a sense of danger and adventure and it was probably the only game at the time that pushed 3D cards to their breaking

point, back in a time when accelerated 3D was still an exciting new prospect. Unreal II is a mixed bag of good and bad, somewhere in the middle of Heaven and Hell on a little planet called Earth.

From the moment it starts to the ending credits Unreal II drifts somewhere between excellent, good and average, it's almost like watching your favourite actor in a poorly directed and produced movie. The game is immediately striking and for about an hour into the action you can't help but be impressed - the entire production has a

polished feel and look to it and only on the odd occasion does this shiny exterior reveal imperfections.

The real challenge facing the developers with Unreal II was creating the perfect game, as this is how many fondly remember the first Unreal. But... in releasing a sequel five years down the line not only do you have nostalgia to live up to but you must also make a significant technological leap ahead of the competition. On the nostalgia count the original Unreal is well preserved in the minds of gamers and thinking you can have more of the same is a mistake on both the part of

▼ The Atlantis - <yawn>, nice for the first few minutes then it starts getting a little <yawn> dull... <yawn>

 $\ \label{the:decomposition}$ This is why you need the laser slicer... Remember to be gentle









the developer and the gamer. On the technological front the game does exceptionally well but again doesn't come close to what the original did for the future of 3D gaming. It's best to try and experience Unreal II without any preconceived ideas based on your experience of the original, this way you might enjoy the game.

The story... well it's the old one about the [mysterious and/or ancient and/or glowing] alien artefact(s) that everyone wants to use for their own evil plot - it's the standard stocking filler with predictable twists and no real surprises. Don't worry about the details - it all works out in the end. What's more important is the approach the game has taken to the telling of the story, or, more correctly, outlining the missions. Before and after each mission you get to spend some time on your spaceship the Atlantis; aboard the Atlantis you can explore the ship, get your briefing and weapon load out and finally launch the mission. There is usually more information than you could possibly need to complete the mission and one thing the developers will never be accused of is being too vague. These 'intermission' levels aboard the Atlantis are interesting to experience one or twice but by the end of the game they only serve to interrupt the flow of the action and drop off the pace. While onboard the Atlantis, an alien invasion or even a short trip outside and onto the hull to clear off alien parasites would have been a nice distraction but as it stands spending time on the ship is an annoying interruption. One other point is that you cannot skip any of the short video sequences as your ship comes and goes. So in effect the end result starts with a longer than normal loading time, get mission information, more loading, watch your small ship leave the big ship, more loading, start the mission, die, repeat. Just remember to save once you arrive at your destination or you'll have to watch the same thing again and again.

The other important area of focus is the graphics engine. To sum it up, it's better then most other engines - it performs well and looks the part but just doesn't do enough to really raise the eyebrow. Notable highlights

however come in the form of flame effects - the best to date as well as some good looking particle effects such as cigarette smoke and other gaseous emissions. Based on all the hype the graphics engine just doesn't do enough and in some cases other,

old games have done better, pity... thankfully there's always DOOM III to look forward to.

One aspect of the game that accelerates well away from everything else out there is the level design; the scale and attention to detail is astonishing. The downside to this is that the ideas, locations and settings are somewhat disappointing and unimaginative - especially one of the later levels that blatantly plagiarises the style and feel of Swiss surrealist H.R. Giger's work, right down to the dark biomechanical trimmings and eerie atmosphere. On other levels this formula doesn't apply and the designers display a great deal of innovation, once again the positives are nullified by the negatives. However, end of the day in playing through the game you certainly always have the sense that you are on an alien world and that can never be a bad thing.

One of the more familiar enemies you'll encounter are the Skaarj - Unreal II is set in the same universe as the first game but there's no trace of any of the other races or characters.

The AI is well above average and although a few more different types of enemies would have been just right the ones you have to kill are crafty and each display a uniquely different style of attack and varying degrees of intelligence. For a refreshing change of pace the enemies in Unreal II are smart enough to dodge your bullets, aim rockets where you might dodge or simply come straight at you with little regard for their own safety. This impressive display of Al makes Unreal II one of the more challenging games you'll play this year.

Besides the standard button pressing, door opening, enemy killing and corridor trawling your way through each of the levels, Unreal II does occasionally offer up some interesting play dynamic innovations. In some missions you'll be required to instruct a team of marines to defend an area by separately ordering each one of them to defend this entrance or guard that location; this is fun but shallow and really shouldn't be confused with anything you might refer to as strategy. Other variations of play include setting up defendable perimeters by placing weapon turrets and field generators, providing sniper cover for a marine and even rescuing a bitchy scientist. These few alternative missions and the well conducted outside areas manage to break up the stock play dynamic often enough to make the overall experience sharp and varied.

Unreal II is an immensely enjoyable experience and in terms of technical design, polish and good old fashioned fun there isn't anything out there that meets this standard. On the downside the game often crashes to the desktop with seemingly random errors, takes ages to load and doesn't really do anything you haven't seen or experienced before. It's one of those games that you simply must play because it's the next evolution of the first person shooter and the one thing it has done right is in setting a new standard. Overall, it's refreshing and fun but doesn't live up to all the promise it created for





Pentium III 733MHz | 256 MB RAM | 8x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator

- Exceptional level design & Al
- O Lovely graphics engine
- Great sense of fun and adventure
- Clichéd 8 Bugged

Not revolutionary

Summary

Unreal II is a mixed bag of sweet and sour. It manages to ride through all the bumpy patches thanks to some decent level design and excellent Al. It isn't the revolutionary shooter we were all waiting for but definitely one that can not be missed if you're any kind of FPS fan.









IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES

We live in a time when technology is progressing at an amazing pace. Things we thought impossible yesterday are becoming reality today, today's theory tomorrow's practical example. One of the most controversial scientific fields today is genetic engineering, a topic that has long been a favourite of science fiction writers and film makers. Given recent advances, interest in the subject has been revived, with some writers visualising wonderful applications, while others paint a bleak picture of science gone mad.

Impossible Creatures is a real-time

strategy title that occupies a middle

ground between the

abovementioned two

extremes. Needless to

all current strategy

games, this one

makes use of 3D

technology - the

graphical

days of 2D

say, as is the case with

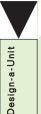
real-time strategy days are, indeed, well over. The story begins in the late 1930s, with a disturbing letter reaching the protagonist of the story, one Rex Chance. The letter reveals that Rex's father, a oncerenowned but since-discredited scientist, can be found on a remote island atoll. Rex. who hasn't seen his father in many years, takes off on a journey to locate his father. Cel-shaded animated sequences with a firstperson voiceover convey the story. While the mood of

> the story's presentation is at times gloomy, the overall feel of the game can be compared to an adventure film such as Indiana Jones crossed with a B-grade science fiction flick, and names like Rex Chance and Lucy Willing for its main characters reinforce this impression, not to mention the flying hover-locomotive! (No, that's not a typo!) The animated sequences are not the only way the

story is conveyed, however. Much plot action takes place using the in-game engine, much the same way WarCraft III and Command & Conquer: Generals handle it. Interestingly enough, these sections tend to be more light-hearted and even farcical, and the

dialogue is often very cheesy, albeit comical.

Impossible Creatures features a control interface that includes a very easy-to-use camera control system. The camera can be panned in the traditional manner by pushing at the edges of the screen with the cursor nothing new there. But rotating the camera is handled in



units

The idea of designing units by combining components is not a new one in real-time strategy gaming. A number of games have, to date, offered gamers elements to combine in order to build an army. Earth 2150, for example, allowed the research of various chassis, bodies and turrets, allowing players to design vehicles with their own preferred movement and firepower characteristics. Unfortunately, the fact that anything could be combined with anything else meant that players used their favourite (ie. most powerful currently available) movement method with their two or three favourite (once again, most powerful) weapons, resulting in two or three units almost indistinguishable from each other. In fact, both players' armies would usually be very similar too. This led to rather boring battles lacking in variety,

with the added difficulty that it became very difficult to identify units' allegiance, never mind exact type. Impossible Creatures may end up suffering from the same problem, as most of the time creatures have four legs, a head and a tail, and their resulting graphics are not easy to tell apart.







playing god

The Sigma Technology depicted in the game's story allows two animals' characteristics to be mixed together and deployed in the form of what, at the end of the day, can only be called an impossible creature! By mixing and matching the selected animals' limbs and body parts, new creatures are designed that have properties typical of both animals they are derived from. So, for example, combining a wolf with an archer fish can yield a pack hunter that can spit blasts of water at a distance. Furthermore, depending on which body parts have been used from each original animal, the resulting beast may be able to swim or may have keen senses, and its other attributes, such as its main attack mode, speed and armour, will also be influenced. Once the creature has been designed, it can be produced at a creature

multiplayer

The big question for any game these days is "how does it shape in multiplayer?" Most games these days are designed with multiplayer action in mind, and for a game to truly succeed, it must make it into the competitive play arena. So it comes as something of a surprise that Impossible Creatures boasts a very entertaining single-player campaign but doesn't offer the game's full functionality in multiplayer. The game's most interesting aspect is accessing the creature combiner and using it to experiment with splicing different animals. So why is this element missing from multiplayer? For network and skirmish games, the player is prompted to choose an army from a set of pre-designed ones, each with its own style and general approach (for example, Velika's army is strong in air units, but consequently

vulnerable to ranged attacks). While playing the skirmish or network game, however, there is no access to the creature combiner or army builder. This, I think, is a great pity, as tinkering around with various odd combinations of animals is exactly what the game is about! Consequently, Impossible Creatures offers more entertainment in single-player campaign mode, and I seriously doubt it will be at all able to compete with the likes of WarCraft III and Generals in the competitive gaming world.



a way I have not seen in any other game - by holding

down Alt and moving the mouse around one rotates the view in a "free-look" mode. Releasing Alt does not snap the view back to where it was; in fact, one can play the game from any view angle. In order to restore the default orientation, just push Backspace. However, in certain other respects the control interface is a bit primitive; for example, while structures can be numbered, multiple buildings cannot be assigned to the same group, meaning that one needs a digit for each Creature Chamber (creature production facility), precluding simple simultaneous creation of multiple units of a type. However, in most regards the control interface is adequate.

The game makes use of two resources, coal and electricity. Coal is mined by henchmen, which are basic worker units, while electricity is collected

with lightning rods or generated at a generator and stored. The local wildlife can (in the single-player campaigns) also be considered a resource, as it can provide genetic information that can be used in creature design. However, this aspect has been handled in a very restrictive manner - each mission has certain few animals living on the map, and the study of each is an optional objective. The game's dynamic is very traditionally RTS - worker units (the henchmen) can build structures. Some of these gather or generate resources, while others are used to create units, while yet others serve as research facilities, allowing various upgrades to be developed. The building tech-tree itself is fairly simple compared to some games, given that the

The game's graphics, it must be said, are very impressive. The bizarre combinations of different animals in one package look convincing, with smooth transitions between the different texture types of body parts. The animations are also quite impressive - smooth and fairly realistic looking. In-game sound does much to set the mood and atmosphere of the game - the music reflects the state of affairs to a degree, changing to a mischievous, playful tune when the

main focus of the game is the cunning design of

effective units.

characters engage in animated sequences furthering the story. The creatures' sounds, however, are the most striking - as they obey a move command or, particularly, as they fight, the beasties emit a cacophony of feral sounds (which are dependent on the unit's genetic heritage) and zooming in on a battle allows one to enjoy beautiful animations accompanied by suitable snarls, growls and howls. All this conspires to lend the game a "wild" feel quite unlike anything I've ever seen in real-time strategy.

Impossible Creatures' unusual concept is likely to lead to players learning to favour certain types of animal characteristics for their creations, meaning that each player will finish the game using different units. This is quite unlike other RTS titles on the market, which generally require competence with as many of the

available units as possible. However,
a balance of abilities will
still be required in order
to succeed.



all games reviewed on rectron machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 800 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 12 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator | 1 GB HDD

- O Very pretty graphics
- Atmospheric sound
- Controls adequate no moreMultiplayer not very exciting
- Entertaining story
- 8 A game of numbers

Summary

This game has a very good concept - an original implementation of an idea that's been around the block. While the single-player campaign is entertaining and satisfyingly long, the multiplayer aspect falls rather short. Unfortunately, this game encourages a mass-building game rather than a high strategy style of play. Nevertheless, well worth a look.

72









GROM

One of the little known facts about the Third Reich was the fact that much of its ideology was built on superstition. As a matter of fact Hess was captured because his horoscope (faked by British Intelligence) said that the British would surrender to him on a given day... There have been movies exploring the fact too, like Raiders of the Lost Ark, to name one. But this is the first time that the topic is covered by a PC game. And this time the Nazis are moving a little further afield to get what they want...

Tibet. Land of mystery. A place where the impossible seems all too real, and miracles are an everyday occurrence. Or that's what they would have us believe,



but that's a different story... This mystical and mountainous land is the setting for Grom, a new action adventure title from Rebel Mind, published by CDV. It details the adventures of Grom, a Polish national who flees the atrocities of the Second World War and begins a new life as a smuggler in Tibet. But his past is about to catch up with him, as the Nazis begin showing an interest in some ancient Tibetan legends that could help them dominate the world. It is pretty obvious, from the outset, that Grom is something special. Basically an isometric strategic

adventure title, it requires the player to take part in puzzles, interaction sequences and, of course, combat in the guise of the deeply disturbed character of Grom. However, as serious as that may seem, it is difficult to approach Grom seriously at all. The game looks and feels like a cartoon, with graphics that are bright and inyour-face, characters that are cartoony in looks and funny in personality, and an overall feel of, well... fun. The developers have managed to create a wonderful juxtaposition within the title - the fun look combined with the deadly serious subject matter. There may be

> funny sequences and dialogue a plenty, but the nature of the tale is rather grim. Grom is plagued by two problems, one minor and the other fairly serious. The minor problem is a matter of language. The game was not originally designed in English, and some of the translation went awry. The bigger problem is that the control interface can be very painful. However, one can



eventually master it, and a player who pays attention to what he is doing shouldn't have any problems. With more than 40 characters, over 30 useable items and 7 chapters set in almost 100 locations, Grom is a huge, fun and engrossing game, full of rich and accurate detail (like the Buddhist tradition of special gestures performed in the morning). The player can juggle up to five different characters at once, just to make things interesting. Be warned, though... this game may appear to be a walk in the park, but it is very tough to get through. It has a high frustration factor, but is very rewarding none the less. I personally believe that Grom will be one of the year's sleeper hits!



Pentium III 350MHz | 128 MB RAM | 12 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 800 MB HDD

- Great detail
- @ Funny!
- 8 Some translation mistakes
- Challenging
- 8 Finicky controls

Summary

Grom is probably one of the most underrated games in a long time. A strategic action adventure set in Tibet during World War 2, the title takes the player through much magic and mystery while fighting Nazis galore in challenging battles. This is a great game, full of laughs despite its serious subject matter

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COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

Westwood Studios and Blizzard Entertainment have been leading the real-time strategy scene since Command & Conquer and WarCraft, respectively. Now, Westwood's latest offering, the thoroughly stunning Generals, ironically shows us

why Blizzard's influence is growing.

So why, you may be asking yourself, am I extolling Blizzard in a review of a Westwood game? Simple computer games, just as the music and fashion

> industries, are subject to trends, and trend-setters are those developers whose ideas and approaches are adopted by others. WarCraft III has certainly set certain standards for the genre, such as the basic layout of the interface, and approaches to structure and unit creation. and Generals reflects some of these, though manages to do so without losing its Command & Conquer identity. Generals is set in a speculative not-too-distant future that is modelled on present-day political realities. In this hypothetical world, the

communist states have been unified by China, while a world-wide terrorist organisation threatens world peace. Being an American-made game, it comes as no surprise that the USA faction retains its national identity. This move to three playable factions is a most welcome evolution from previous Command & Conquer titles. Other departures from previous precedents include a bottom-mounted command bar (as opposed to the previously used sidebar), the use of constructor units rather than a construction yard (one of those trends I mentioned above) and the fact that no longer can two players use the same copy of the game for multiplayer (a most unwelcome break with tradition!). One of the best changes to the play dynamic is the fact that now unit production facilities also act as repair sites for the type of unit they produce. This makes sense, really, as one would think that if a factory can build a tank, it should be able to fix it too!

The graphics in Generals have reached new heights of detail and animation, as far as Westwood games are concerned. You may remember the terrible unit graphics in Tiberian Sun - well, forget these - the units in generals are highly detailed, and there is even a degree





mutliplayer

Along with being the inventors of the realtime strategy genre, Westwood also have the more dubious distinction of having been consistent in delivering problematic network engines for their Command & Conquer series of games. This "tradition" began with the very first title in the series, Command & Conquer, later to be called Tiberian Dawn. Some of you will remember the infamous "Game out of sync" error message. It was largely due to this network instability that some players adopted an aggressive, "seize the initiative immediately" approach, simply to avoid long games, as anything over 20 or 30 minutes became a dicey affair, with no saving option. Inefficient and slow network

Westwood's notorious networking

code became a Command & Conquer trademark, and certainly helped Blizzard get the upper hand with their seamless StarCraft. The original release of Generals was marred by this same troublesome multiplayer networking issue, and the game may well have been doomed, had Westwood not decided to rectify the matter. Now, at the time of writing this, Generals has had no less than three patches, scant weeks after its release.

story

General Mayhem

Multiplayer seems to have been the main thrust in the development of Generals. This is evident in the game's lack of story, even in the campaign missions. Rather, these seem to be a series of puzzles and tests, each presenting new units and tactics to be tried out. In terms of tutorial value, the single-player missions are a

success, and there are three available difficulty levels. It is when this game (patched up to date, mind you) is set up on a network and several players jump into the fray that it shines. To put it simply, Generals is unbelievably frantic. In a head-to-head game, expect to be fighting within the first two minutes, if you are playing against a halfway decent opponent. Furthermore, the balance is so fine that it is usually the first player to make a mistake that loses (not an unusual concept, except make even a tiny mistake and your chances diminish appreciably!)

heroes

Westwood's General Points system is an interesting answer to the hero concept that has become so popular in real-time strategy titles of late. Battlefield accomplishments, which is to say, blowing enemy things up, earn the player General Points, or promotions. These can be spent on various "skills", but instead of these being applied to a special unit, they influence the technology tree of the player's side. Thus, additional unit types,

secondary superweapons and special abilities can be acquired. Five levels of promotion are available, but there are many more skill options, so all the skills can never be acquired, and it is thus a matter of choosing a set that suits the player's game style. Different combinations of skills make possible the implementation of different strategies.

who's who

The Factions at a Glance

Behind the Battlefield

USA - Possessed of cutting-edge technology, this side boasts huge air assets. USA's ground vehicles aren't the fastest, but this is compensated by aerial mobility. Main superweapon: Particle Cannon that can be re-aimed while firing. China - This army relies primarily on huge numbers; many of its units enjoy bonuses while grouped with large numbers of units of the same type. Fire weapons and gattling guns feature repeatedly. Main superweapon: Nuclear Missile, which does ridiculous damage in a large area,

poisoning the ground with radioactive fallout for quite some time.

GLA - The terrorist Global Liberation Army lists independence and high mobility as its fortes. Possessing no air power whatsoever, it makes up for it with lightning-quick ground vehicles. GLA can salvage the remains of destroyed enemy units, for cash or as gun upgrades. GLA bases do not use power! Main superweapon: Scud Storm, a volley of nine large explosive rockets loaded with anthrax.



of damage representation on the units themselves, no longer just the buildings. The camera controls are simple enough, although most players prefer not to manipulate it beyond occasionally zooming in and out, as real-time strategy requires constant orientation. A sad fact is that there are no longer any video cutscenes, everything being presented via the (admittedly very capable) in-game engine. Another cute touch is the extensive use of "bullet time-esque" graphical tricks such as freeze-rotate and dramatic zoom-fades, which show off the game engine to good advantage. However, I hope you're not here looking for a story-line - Generals has none to speak of, to an even lesser extent than previous Command & Conquer titles. Furthermore, the single-player campaigns are disappointingly short, even though they are offered in three difficulty levels. This is obviously intended as a multiplayer game first and foremost.

As always. Westwood have provided a stunning soundtrack. New to Command & Conquer (and yet another of those trends whereof I spoke) are individual soundtracks for the three factions: the GLA's is particularly amusing, as it has a distinctly Arabic sound! Some people have objected to the game's apparently politically loaded content, but surely these humourless individuals can see the appeal of making games relevant to the present-day situation? Did these same people also complain about Counter-Strike's theme of terrorists vs counter-terrorists? But back to the sound. The voice acting is, as usual in a Westwood game, of a high quality, and generally quite amusing (once again, the GLA side is the most entertaining, with gems such as the Worker's "Cannot we live in peace?"). Despite some gripes, I am thoroughly hooked on this game. The three factions are refreshingly different from each other, yet well balanced; at least, after a couple of weeks of play, I still think so - no doubt imbalances will make themselves evident with time, as countless players ferret out every possible combo. And although Westwood have learned much from Blizzard, Generals retains a uniquely "Westwoodesque" flavour and feel. If you enjoyed any previous Command & Conquer games, or are a strategy fan, do yourself a favour and check this one out!



ratings

The score awarded to this game is a composite of two scores, one from a single-player perspective, the other from a multiplayer point-of-view. As a single-player pastime, Generals scores 75, while as a multiplayer battle-fest, it rates an impressive 90. You may notice that the overall score is not a straight average, but rather leans toward the multiplayer rating. This is because I believe this game's main emphasis to be competitive play, a fact evident in the game's very design.



all games reviewed on rectron machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 800 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 1.8 GB HDD

- Beautiful visuals and level of detail
- Great multiplayer
- Excellent overall dynamic
- Story? What story?
- ⊗ No more videos
- 8 One copy per player

Summary

A Note About the Score

Generals suffers from a few minor flaws, though none of these detract noticeably from the playability of the game. Great graphics and sound make this a good title from a technical standpoint, while the hectic pace of the action ensures that there is no sleeping on duty!

85







AMERICAN CONQUEST

History is an interesting and often violent collection of events that dragged us kicking and screaming from the dark ages into our modern and (supposedly) civilised society. The road from then to now was filled with bloody battles and savage colonisation - just take a look at the American continent...

GSC Game World, the folks that brought us Cossacks, present a new title through CDV. American Conquest details the turbulent early history of the European colonisation of the Americas. As can be expected, these were violent and bloody times.

Starting from the early days, right back when Columbus accidentally found the West Indies, and going through to the American War of Independence and initial skirmishes with natives over land and a fledgling United States of America, American Conquest is an engrossing and challenging look at a very interesting historical period. Whether you are playing as Cortez against the ancient civilisations of South America or the British trying to quell the upstart Americans who wish their independence from the crown, the action is fast and furious.

However, like Cossacks, this isn't a title where producing a huge number of soldiers and storming the enemy is a

possibility. Well, actually it is, but this is a tactic best used when playing the Native Americans, who can produce troops quickly and cheaply. Should you play any of the colonising nations, you will have to use the same kind of tactics and formations that were needed to

succeed in Cossacks - a disciplined army is stronger than a mob, after all.

pretty much a carbon copy of
Cossacks... a little
disappointing in that, but
engine advances have
allowed a few extras
to be added to the
title. The biggest
difference is the view

With a few exceptions, this game is

distances. You can either get right in on the action (where you will see the

high detail of character animations) or can zoom out to see the big picture. There isn't a middle ground to the view distance, which is annoying, but the game is still playable despite this. Graphically, American Conquest has highly detailed units and structures set against beautifully constructed 3D terrain.

Playing the game is a very time consuming activity. Battles can last for hours as the players try to best each other. Proper use of formation, terrain elevation and

garrisoning of units in buildings are all very important aspects of the game, and the wise player will learn to use these aspects very quickly.

As I said before, American Conquest is more than just a "go in guns blazing" title, and true strategy fans will love the way that tactics enter into the game - making it possible for even a small army to best its opponents, provided the basis of a strong base and proper research and improvements is created by the player.

Overall, this is a very fine strategy title that requires a larger than normal amount of micromanagement. It will thrill fans of the genre without a shadow of a doubt.



all games reviewed on rectron machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium II 450MHz | 64 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator 1.3 GB HDD

- Nice tactics use
- Huge battles
- Challenging

Summary

Here's a true challenge for strategy fans - this historically based game, spanning from the discovery of the Americas through to the formation of the United States, takes every aspect of battle into account... making for som very challenging yet very fun game dynamics. It's great stuff, huge and utterly epic as the "modern" world clashes with ancient civilisations; in the making

83

8 Not enough view options

8 Very similar to Cossacks





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COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 3

It has been a few years since the initial WWII combat simulation rush, and there are still a few developers competing in recreating this exciting frame of aviation history on our PC's. Microsoft is no exception, and is famous for creating simulations with a large following across the globe. With the third iteration, Combat Flight Simulator 3 brings more of what fans came to love about this simulation over the years, and have almost grown exponentially in scope. As in real life, one has to put up with growing pains along the way...

The first version of Microsoft's Combat Flight Simulator (CFS) had stiff competition in the form of Microprose's European Air War, Janes's WWII Fighters, and Fighter Squadron Screaming Demons over Europe. Although not the pick of the crop back then, a solid foundation was built for future versions. CFS2 wasn't a big improvement on CFS, but with their new graphics engine it blew everything else out of the air at the time with the best looking clouds, planes and 3D cockpits. The problem with the series so far was that the campaign was a





static scripted affair, a bit of branching, but nevertheless sterile. The development team took a long hard look at what was missing, and devised a dynamic campaign that would simulate the ebb and flow of front-line forces in Europe during WWII.

In CFS3, the focus of the simulation has shifted to frontline aerial warfare such as close air support, and lots of interdiction missions. This gives the virtual aviator the opportunity to get down low and dirty with as many bombs and rockets the plane will carry to search and destroy enemy targets such as tanks, ships, trains, bridges, vehicle convoys, artillery emplacements, and

static environments such as rail yards and factories. Although any mud-mover's dream, the fighter jocks will still get to fly combat air patrols, escort missions and fighter sweeps. There are quite a variety of planes to fly in CFS3, and feature the most popular fighters and medium bombers of the American, British and German forces. Most planes have different variants available, and the list includes the P-51 Mustang, P-47 Thunderbolt, P-38 Lightning, Spitfire IX, Hawker Typhoon and Tempest, BF-109 and FW-190 fighter aircraft. The medium bombers are the B-25 Mitchell, B-26 Marauder, De Havilland Mosquito and the Junkers Ju88. A new twist in CFS3 is to fly some more advanced aircraft that were only introduced at the end of the war. after the war, or never managed to quite get off the drawing board. These include the P-55 Ascender, P-80 Shooting Star, Me-262, Gotha 229, Dornier 335, and the De Havilland Vampire. Most of these planes were very advanced for their time, as can be seen in the Gotha 229 that is basically a twinjet engine flying wing fighterbomber. With a dynamic campaign that could easily extend beyond the historic timeline of WWII, these planes create a good "what if" scenario that might intimidate the purist, but certainly spice things up. Overall the planes have very good 3D models and remarkable skins, but it is evident that some aircraft did not receive as much attention compared with others. This is most evident in the virtual cockpits that do not even come close to the standard set by IL-2 Sturmovik. The medium bombers have playable gunner-stations, although some of these lack gun sights. At this point one might get the impression that some of the aircraft were





not 100% finished, and this was proven to be the truth when Microsoft released a patch to fix some of the models. The modeling of flight is above average, but a letdown when one is used to IL-2 Sturmovik. It is possible to achieve accelerated stalls and departures when pushing the planes too hard, but again some planes "feel" better than others. The damage model seems to have been carried over from CFS2, and although Microsoft states that location damage modeling has been improved, gremlins such as the "roll-bug" of CFS2 is still evident.

CFS3 has a quick mission builder that is great for setting up missions quickly, and with literally a few clicks one can quickly get into the action. There is also the option of a few single missions, and although these are supposedly included to introduce and prepare the player for the dynamic campaign, they were found to be much more difficult than the campaign missions. The real lifesaver and most exciting feature of CFS3 is the

dynamic campaign. At the start of a campaign, a country is selected, and then it is time to create the pilot. CFS3 introduces a role-playing element that allows the player to build a base pilot with skills divided in categories Situational Awareness (vision), G-Tolerance and Health. As your pilot gains experience, one receives skill points that can be allocated. Prestige points for your pilot and squadron is accumulated, and can be used to purchase newer planes, or to fund a ground assault on selected frontline strong points. One can either fly as a fighter- or bomber pilot in the campaign, where fighters will be the traditional fighter in either a dogfighter or fighter-bomber configuration, and the bomber role will happen in the medium bombers.

The graphics engine of CFS3 features stunning visuals such as highly detailed scenery at low

altitude and higher up, volumetric clouds and good special effects. The drawback of this is the exorbitant hardware requirements needed to view CFS3 in its full splendor. Even 2Ghz and higher machines with GeForce 4 or similar graphics cards does not seem to be able to cope with the demand, but by dropping most of the detail sliders, it is playable on much slower machines with older graphic cards.

The patch Microsoft released fixes many bugs in CFS3, and may give better performance on some systems. Of all the new features the dynamic campaign is the most significant one, and is where the player would want to spend most of their time. Unfortunately there are many things in CFS3 that have a rough and unfinished feel to

it, and it seems that Microsoft has fallen prey to what happens when products are rushed out of the door. Except for this and the high price to be paid for CFS3 compared to other titles, it is a good-value simulation with excellent re-play value, and is recommended to any virtual pilot that has an interest in WWII and the European theatre.











imum Specification

Pentium 400 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator 90 MB HDD

- Dynamic campaign
- O Variety of planes
- Good low level scenery
- Mediocre flight dynamics
- **8** System hog
- 8 Buggy out of the box

Summary

Combat Flight Simulator 3 has a strong and proud heritage, and has matured to a multi-faceted and good quality simulator. Various bugs are present, and while some are minor, others do affect the experience adversely. Nevertheless worth the purchase, it has a strong dynamic campaign with excellent replay value.

79

BATTLEFIELD 1942: THE ROAD TO ROME



The guys over at DICE must be chuffed. They created a great game, and they recently grabbed the Best Game Design award at GDC 2003. But instead of going to award parties, shouldn't they rather be working on patches and free add-ons?

I remember back when DOOM was released, it was

quickly followed by a ton of level editors. That was the beginning of a new age in gaming - the modding/mapmaking age. Since then things have evolved quickly, to the point that most developers now release SDKs to help out people who want to make maps or mods for their game. And these range from

simple maps to all-out conversions, such as Counter-Strike and Natural Selection for Half-Life and The Family Grave for Undying. Rule of thumb: support your community. But DICE seem to have decided to snub the large community so feverously playing their game online. Battlefield 1942 is excellent, and the subsequent patches are slowly dragging more and more players into actually playing the game, but up to now there has not been any kind of SDK or level editor released, despite some murmurs that they are working on one. If I sound bitter, it's because I am. Road to Rome is, by all accounts, a nice add-on pack, if it weren't for the hordes of much-better expansions released for other games. To give a quick breakdown, RTR gives you six new maps, two new sides, eight new vehicles/mountings and two new weapons. There has been no improvement to the AI and they didn't even bother to include a new intro made just for the new

In short, take out the new sides, and perhaps the vehicles, and there is nothing here that fans

expansion.

couldn't have provided, had they had the tools. Okay, there are new barriers, such as boulders and logs created into makeshift walls, plus carrier boats which now appear on some rivers as well on the new maps. The maps themselves are of great quality, though, and I can imagine at least half of them becoming instant online favourites. Thanks to the Italian country side, most maps are quick and mountain-intensive, making for great King of the Hill battles. The problem is that there are only six of them - any 1942 player will tell you this is not nearly enough.

The Italians join the war with the Axis, as do the French

with their own hardware (though most are just re-skinned existing units). The Italian tanks are a bit different, though, and the British and Germans now both In a nutshell, it's what every Battlefield fan wants, but we were all expecting so much more. If this is successful, though, Pacific expansions, by which time I hope development community could exist. The pack, great as it is, is little more than a rip-off. After all the support from

Free Forces for the Allies. Each comes have a light bomber each, making bombing runs much easier. you can probably expect Desert and an SDK is released so that a



one solitary free map and a run-of-the-mill expansion that feels more like a slap-dash cash-in than anything else. Not a great way to treat your fans, DICE.







Pentium III 500MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator

- Good mans
- (3) Light Bombers
- Bayonet for engineers
- 8 Lacks development tools
- 8 Feels a bit cut & paste

Summary

In a nutshell, I expected much more, Six maps, no matter how great, are not enough. The two new sides don't add much either, and the Al has not been tweaked. Doubtless, you'll get it anyway - the maps are good enough, but the pack leaves a bitter taste in your mouth.

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FIFA FOOTBALL 2003

It's the rush of adrenalin as you charge into the penalty area unmarked, the shot at goal in the final minute

of the last half, the desperate dive of the goalkeeper as your well aimed strike sails into the back of the net. It's the roar of the crowd as they break into song and the feeling of pride as you raise the trophy at the end of a victorious season. It's football, it's the "beautiful

game" and it's what FIFA

2003 is all about...

EA sports have (from the very beginning) used the FIFA license as their flagship sports title and have constantly pushed hardware and imaginations to the edge of belief. FIFA 2003 continues the trend and not only delivers the goods but also sets a benchmark for others to follow. Now I know what you're thinking, "same old same old," and "same FIFA different date". Well you couldn't be more wrong. Absolutely everything in the game has been redone from scratch and all that was left alone was the word FIFA on

the box. Starting off you can

select two playing modes, namely Simulation and Action, which determines the scope of how the game is

> going to be played. The simulation setting allows for a more strategy orientated experience closer to that of real football. The zoomed out camera angle allows you to enjoy a better overall view of the action which in turn provides room for more better tactical analysis of the game as it's played. Action on the other hand is geared more towards getting grass in your hair and dirt between your teeth as the game is brought speed. The Al level can be selected too and ranges from no brains amateur to fiendish world class with a steep learning curve in between. All a friendly match (Manchester United vs. Arsenal sounds fun...), club championship (champion's league), a full season in one of the fourteen leagues from around the world. With that said I am sure you can see that the amount of depth and replay

expansive attacking moves and closer with less rules and more that's left is to choose between Tournament (world cup) or play ability of this title is massive to say the least. Another nice feature is the ability to choose which strip your team dons (in some cases up to three or four) before running out onto the field. All the stadiums in the game are true to their real life counterparts down to the very last blade of grass and more importantly full of life due to the huge amount of animation used. The crowds wave their arms and stand and cheer as the game is played. Flags wave wildly as cameras and smoke bombs go off all adding to the fantastic vibe as the home crowd breaks into one of the clubs actual chants or songs. Not only does the crowd sing well but so do the artists featured on the games awesome soundtrack. Artists such as Fatboy Slim, Timo Maas, Avril Lavigne and Antiloop's "In my mind" top the bill and after being a dj for seven years I can honestly say FIFA 2003 has one of the best soundtracks I've heard in a game title so far. The sound in the game is incredible and coupled with the excellent television style presentation of game and detailed player models that not only look like the real life players but have also had individual behaviour patterns coded so that Beckham looks, feels and plays like Beckham would be expected to.

Half time and post match highlights round off the experience into one slick and sleek package that should leave even the most demanding football fan coming back for more and more... All in all if it's football you want then you shouldn't need more than FIFA 2003 can



450 MB HDD

- Presentation
- Soundtrack & audio
- Control
- 8 Same as other FIFA titles 8 Load times

Summary

All in all FIFA 2003 offers a well rounded and well presented look at the world of football. Great depth in play dynamic and superb control added to exceptional graphics and soundtrack should have even the most avid fan satisfied that all those hard earned rands are well spent







































MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

Mortal Kombat, in its original incarnation, was introduced at the time when Street Fighter II was king among arcade fighters, and Mortal Kombat, mainly through excessive use of blood and internal organs, managed to put up a more than decent fight. Despite severely disappointing MK titles in recent years, Midway are back, and they've managed to regain the spark of the original with Deadly Alliance.

The original Mortal Kombat had to be one of the most controversial videogames ever released. In a time when blood was still somewhat of a rarity on our TV screens, particularly in videogames, Mortal Kombat gave it to us in bucket loads. Furthermore, each character, after winning a fight, was able to perform a Fatality on his opponent, ending aforementioned opponent's life in a gruesome and painful way. Mortal Kombat II expanded on this, and is regarded by many, including myself, as the best game of the series up to this point, mainly on account of the way in which the titles deteriorated in quality after its release. The third in the series introduced new characters, and faster paced combat, but somehow lost the feel

of the original titles. Spin offs, such as Mortal Kombat Mythologies, were dismal failures, and Mortal Kombat 4, which appeared only on home systems, was not a

complete disappointment, but by the same token was nothing remarkable. In an attempt to distance this game from the tarnished reputation of its predecessors, it has been named Deadly Alliance, rather than Mortal Kombat 5, and despite the measure of apprehension I had about this game before actually playing it, I soon found it to be a truly excellent fighting game.

Once more unto the breach

The story behind
Mortal Kombat:
Deadly Alliance is
much the same as that
of earlier titles in the
series: save the
Earthrealm from the
forces of Outworld. This
time, however, Shang
Tsung and Quan Chi
have joined forces, and
assassinated Outworld

emperor Shao Kahn, and are now trying to steal enough souls to power the indomitable army of the Dragon King, which they will then send to various corners of the universe to do not-so-nice things to the inhabitants of said areas all in the name of evil. Raiden, unable to convince the Elder Gods to interfere, relinquishes his godhood and returns to Earthrealm to lead their forces into battle. Deadly Alliance boasts a roster of 23 characters, several of which have to be unlocked, including old favourites like Sub Zero, Scorpion, Kano, Kitana, Sonya and Kung Lao, as well as a few new characters such as Nitara, a vampire, Bo Rai Cho, an Outworld martial arts specialist who trained Liu Kang,







Kenshi, a blind swordsman looking for some serious vengeance, Mavado, leader of an organised crime operation rival to Kano's, and many more. The story line is conveyed through text shown in the Konquest mode, which is a series of 10 "missions" for each character, which train you in their special moves and such, as well as through arcade mode endings, and character sheets obtained when unlocking new characters or costumes. Unfortunately, there is very little in the way of either voice-acting or cut-scenes when it comes to the storyline, and one is left feeling that although the story isn't particularly weak, it could have been told in a better way.

Where would you like to bleed from today?

Mortal Kombat has always been a slightly off the wall fighting game, and so it remains, particularly when compared to the likes of Tekken 4 and Virtua Fighter 4, which lean more towards martial arts simulations than beat 'em ups. Raiden still has his "shocking" superpowers and several characters find themselves able to hurl a projectile of some or other form, but certain moves such as Scorpion's famous Decoy have been eliminated, presumably for added realism. The major changes between this Mortal Kombat and prior titles is that each character now has 3 different fighting styles (one of which is a weapon style). Special moves can be performed using the same commands from any

style, but each style has a different line up of ordinary moves, adding to the strategic element present in Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance. And don't think that brandishing your weapon throughout a fight is the best strategy either, since although you inflict more damage, you will also take more damage while holding a weapon.

> Certain characters with bladed weapons also have an "Impale" move, in which they

plunge their weapon into (generally) the mid-section of an opponent, and there it stays for the rest of the round, constantly draining life. This can make fights unfair if the impalee uses hit and run tactics, but between two honourable "kombatants", it adds a sense of urgency to the play dynamic. Combos too play a large part in the game, and anyone who wishes to truly master Deadly Alliance will need to learn how to use them, but most appear on the character's move sheets and are taught in the Konquest mode. You will be relieved to know, that although you can still juggle your opponent in the air with the

same move several times in a row, the developers have added an "anti-cheese" mechanism to the game, so after 3 hits your opponent stops taking

> damage - definitely an improvement over the endlesssweep routine that could be used in previous titles. The Fatalities too are back, however this time around each character has only one. Nonetheless. they are still quite entertaining, and if you can excuse the absurdity of some of them (Johnny Cage punches clean through his opponent's skull and removes his or her brain, for instance), they certainly look the part.





Can you feel it?

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance is certainly one of the better looking games out there. Several arenas are available, each complete with its own form of special effects, such as statues that propel streams of scorching acid, breakable pillars of ice, and the

ominous army of the Dragon King looking on from the background. The characters are well detailed, if somewhat cartoony, but that may have been done in an attempt to dodge a bullet in terms of negative publicity. Furthermore, the game employs gradual facial damage, similar to that of recent boxing titles, so the amount of damage your character has taken tells in their appearance. Aurally, the sound effects and music are reminiscent of earlier Mortal Kombat titles, with Scorpion's cries of "Get over here!" and the announcer's "Finish Him!" making the jump to PS2 intact. Ultimately, I was pleasantly surprised with Deadly Alliance - it's an extremely playable fighting game, yet takes itself somewhat less seriously than the likes of Tekken and Virtua Fighter. Fast paced, with enough of a strategic element in it, this game is sure to please Mortal Kombat devotees, as well as anyone in the market for a thoroughly enjoyable fighting game.





1-2 Players | 71KB memory | Vibration Function Compatible

- Good graphics
- Very entertaining
- G Gorv
- **⊗** Gorv
- 8 Not suitable for younger players

Summary

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance does well to restore the previously esteemed reputation of the series. Not as realistic as Tekken, but enjoyable nonetheless, and an excellent game with which to treat your mates to a thorough beating. Several bonuses to unlock and fatalities to master mean you'll be playing it for a while. Not one for the kids though!

price: R 529.00 [] genre: action [] internet: http://darkangel.sierra.com







Dark angel

It is an uncertain time. In a strange, postapocalyptic Seattle, Max, the Dark Angel must avenge her past and discover her future amidst all the violence and uncertainty of a world gone mad. But she is no ordinary girl, and she faces no ordinary problems...

Based on Jim Cameron's hit television series, Dark Angel launches itself onto the PlayStation 2 with more fanfare than you could shake a wobbly stick at. In it the player takes the part of Max, a girl who was genetically engineered (with cat DNA, to be precise) to be the ultimate weapon. However, Max managed to escape

from her masters, and now fights for justice and general do-gooder stuff while evading them along the way. It seems that as soon as something makes a big impact in one form of media, all the other formats clamber for space on the bandwagon - ready to ride the successful idea's coat tails all the way to the bank. This, while it is rampant capitalism at work and generally equates to something of a "get rich quick scheme," is not necessarily a bad thing. When the product that surfaces as the result of another venture's success is slick, good and fun to experience, who are we to complain? Dark Angel is a fun and engrossing game that, while trying to masquerade as an adventure title, basically

> devolves into a brawl style fighter at the drop of a hat. See, even the sneak and peek missions can be successfully completed in a run and gun style. This isn't a bad thing either, except for the fact that Max's moves are a little limited (although her Rage moves are very, very cool). She has access to a number of weapons, just for variety in the bruises she leaves behind, and is a wonderfully adept and agile character to be in control of. The puzzle-type events that take place are ridiculously simple and, aside from the fact that you have a few timed missions in which the deadline can get a little hairy, it

Regirements

1 Player | 170KB memory | Vibration Function Compatible

Nice graphics

C Lots of action

Great control

Enter the world of Max, a genetically enhanced warrior stalking the streets of a futuristic Seattle in search of answers. Based on the hit television series, Dark Angel is an action packed title, full of fun and excitement. Yet another television spin off makes good.

⊗ Atmosphere feels "wrong"

isn't too difficult a game to get through. Not dead simple, but certainly not the biggest challenge I have ever come across.

The one element that I feel the game does fall flat on is capturing the feel of the television series. Sure, the characters look more or less like they're supposed to and the futuristic Seattle setting is well represented, but there just seems to be a certain something missing. Perhaps it's the atmosphere, which feels more like an Arnold Schwarzenegger film than a broody, angst ridden television series.

When all is said and done, it is a good game. Its graphics are not bad at all, and the controls are very responsive (perhaps a little too responsive at times). The game is fun to play, overall, and fans of the series will probably enjoy it. Oh, yes, just as a foot note... if this title were to compete against the other title based on a television series with a female lead, made for the other console, it would lose. But it is still a great game!



















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FIREBLADE

Most of us have probably envisaged ourselves as piloting an armed helicopter into combat against the forces of evil in the world, but it doesn't look like the majority of us will ever get the chance to do that. I guess we'll just have to settle for Fireblade then, and we could sure do a lot worse.

Fireblade is an elite anti-terrorist organisation, of which you find yourself a member in the game of the same name. The story line, though relatively thin, involves



Fireblade being sent to eliminate the threat posed by the United Eastern States. You'll be glad to know, that although Fireblade isn't strictly

speaking a simple game to play, it is far less complicated than it could be, and after a few training missions, piloting the choppers feels natural, and although you'll need to utilise every single button on the DualShock2, it's far less daunting than it could have been. Visually, Fireblade boasts realistic explosions, weather effects and well designed bases and vehicles. The scenery too is of a decent quality, however it's not as detailed as it could be, but fortunately the game suffers from very few incidents of slow-down, even with much action taking place on-screen. The missions you'll find yourself undertaking range from simple base protection, where you'll have to fly around taking out bridges and enemy vehicles, to infiltration missions, requiring you to use the helicopter's stealth mode. In the stealth missions, you'll need to fly around slowly, despatching enemy infantry with sniper rifles, and



eliminating vehicles with EMP charges to avoid detection. On the whole, none of the missions are particularly easy, and you'll find that they all provide a

decent challenge, not to mention replay value. The sound effects, however, seem to feel very subdued, but thankfully there's enough action to make up for that. Although Fireblade may not be the perfect game for those who aren't particularly interested in helicopter warfare, those that are will surely find it to be a solid title, though it tends more to the arcade side of things than the simulation side, but that does also mean that it's far easier to get to grips with. It's not perfect, but shouldn't be overlooked.

- Action packed
- Easy enough to get into
- **③** Good graphics
- Weak story
- 8 Arcade play dynamic

73



developer: capcom [] publisher: capcom [] distributor: ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 689.00 [] genre: lightgun shooter [] internet: www.capcom-europe.com
platforms: ps?

reviewer: Adam "T-Rex" Liebman

DINO STALKER

The latest game set in the Dino Crisis universe, is a veritable disaster, suitable only for those owning a PS2 lightgun and just itching for something to play with it with, regardless of how poor that title might be.

Dino Stalker is a total absurdity right from the get-go. The game starts by showing you a poorly rendered cut-scene of your character engaging in combat in his fighter jet during World War II, getting gunned down,



parachuting out and then suddenly being transported to another time zone (and I'm not talking about the GMT variety here), where he finds himself wearing a fancy wrist gadget and

carrying a very big rifle. And, let's not forget, being assaulted by dinosaurs. A true masterpiece of logical script-writing if ever there was one. Aside from the ridiculous concept, Dino Stalker punishes anyone desperate enough to play it in many other ways. Graphically, the cut-scenes are of a poor quality, as are the settings, with the landscapes suffering from severe lack of detail, and many short-cuts, such as improbably dense fog cover, are taken in an attempt to hide Dino Stalker's graphical inadequacy. However, the worst aspect of the game has to be the control system and play dynamic. You will find that each level has a very strict time limit, forcing you to rush around without being able to get any true exploration done. The major problem with this is, however, that, as opposed to most lightgun games, you need to move your character



around at the same time as shooting, resulting in very sore hands, and much frustration, particularly when trying to coax the analog sticks on a DualShock2 into moving

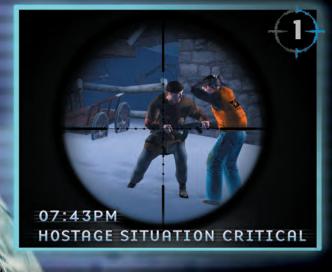
your gun's sight to where you want it to point. Aurally, the sound effects feel far too subdued, and the music is uninspiring. Although the frenetic pace of the game will keep you entertained for a while, it soon grows tiresome, and should you persevere, you'll find the game to be terribly short at any rate. If you don't have a lightgun, avoid this at all costs. Actually, avoid it at any rate - Capcom will need to do better than this to revive their reputation.

- Bosses are a challenge
- Painful control
- **⊗** Absurd story
- Gets boring quickly

48

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KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER

Thanks to the power of the PlayStation 2, things that could never have been done before are now becoming commonplace. Add to this the inventiveness of certain developers, and you end up with some really choice titles. But choice titles need to be more than flash and eye-magic - the games themselves need substance... and originality doesn't hurt, either.

Try as I might, I cannot think of any other title that has



ever touched on the subject matter covered in Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer. At least not in recent memory anyway, which means that this particular title is a big time winner in the originality stakes - a very rare thing indeed...

As the name suggests, this is a surfing title. Take to the waves on a surf board and prove your worth in a game that seems very much like Tony Hawk's Pro Skater (minus the wheels and with water added). Not surprising, seeing as the title is an offshoot of that



popular series, and is developed by the same team responsible for the giant of skate-board titles. However, it is early days for the Pro Surfer range, and there are teething problems aplenty. None of them make a very serious impact on the game as a whole - it is a fun title - but they are annoyances none the less. For example, the fact that the player cannot make a custom surfer is a pain (although not a tragedy) and the controls tend to be a bit finicky - although this can be put down to getting used to a whole new style of playing. Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer is not an easy game to master the tricks are tough to get right, and the game tends towards being a little unforgiving. But it is fun, a great challenge, and is beautiful to look at - especially the very real looking waves. This could be the start of a beautiful relationship...

- Brilliant wave graphics
- 😊 Fun
- Original
- Unforgiving
- 8 No character creator
- 8 Finicky controls

81



developer: sony computer entertainment [] publisher: sony computer entertainment [] distributor: ster kinekor [011] 445-7900 price: R 599.00 [] genre: platform [] internet: www.apeescape2.com platforms: ps2

reviewer: Adam "Gone Ape" Liebman

APE ESCAPE 2

Following yet another accident involving helmets that grant their simian wearers intelligence, the rather mischievous monkey with a Napoleon complex, Specter, is back, this time on the PS2, and once again it's up to you to put a stop to his nefarious plans in Ape Escape 2.

The original Ape Escape, on the PSone, was undoubtedly a revolutionary title - at a time when most games were starting to support the DualShock controller, this game



required it. It took most of the fundamental principles of platform games, most noticeably the control system, and threw it straight out the window, introducing an intuitive, analogstick based weapon control

system, as well as a plethora of gadgets, such as slingshots and RC cars, and was certainly one of the best games in its genre at the time. The sequel is ultimately just more of the same, and unfortunately, both good and bad. The concept is practically identical this time around - you run around through several different settings, trying to nab the monkeys, each of which has different attributes such as alertness, speed, weaponry etc. Along your journey you will also end up collecting gold coins, used to buy prizes from the "Gotcha" machine, through which mini-games, additional movies and other goodies can be won. In terms of visuals, the characters are all well detailed in a very Japanese way, and the settings are cheerful and bright, however Ape Escape 2 lacks panache, and tends to pale in comparison to certain other titles currently



available. Aurally, the sound effects are comical, and the voice acting is certainly adequate. The control system is identical to that of the original, so

those who played the first game will have no trouble getting into it, however anyone who is used to a more traditional control layout will need some time to adjust, but once you get the hang of it, you begin to appreciate the genius behind it. On the whole, Ape Escape 2 is a very solid platformer, but, as appears to be the trend with most games of this genre, fails to bring much innovation over its predecessor. Nonetheless, it's still good fun.

- Control
- Fun
- Kid friendly
- 8 Lack of innovation
- 8 Not graphically stylish

74

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SLY RACCOON

At a time when platform games appear to be going for a dime a dozen, a game in this genre needs to be truly revolutionary to succeed. Sly Raccoon manages to do just that, and will certainly leave you wanting more.

You take on the role of Sly Cooper, a stealthy raccoon, and the latest in a long line of thieves heading all the way back to ancient Egyptian times (supposedly). But you're not the bad guy, since you only steal from



criminals... though that doesn't necessarily make you the good guy either, since the law is pretty much always on your banded tail. Sly's got all the prerequisites for a successful platform game character - he's suave and smooth, with a charming personality and razor-sharp wit, most reminiscent of Sonic than any other platform character in recent times. The game has a thoroughly cartoony feel, all the way down to the graphics, with a film noir style narrative provided by Sly Himself, and cut-scenes in a very Sam and Max style, as he adventures his way through 5 different "episodes" on a mission to track down a family heirloom, the Thievius Raccoonus, a thieving guidebook stolen from the Coopers when SIy was but a wee lad. In addition to the usual "iump around collecting stuff mechanism". Sly Raccoon manages to break the traditional platform tedium with several special moves, such as sneaking around pillars, engaging in slow-motion jumps for precision aiming, and climbing along thin wires with the aid of his trusty cane. Certain of these moves are available from the outset, whereas others are learned from sections of the Thievius Raccoonus, obtained by collecting clues to open vaults, as well as after



defeating bosses. Graphically, the characters and settings are all detailed in wonderful cartoon style, and aside from a few slowdown problems, the game is close to flawless. The sound effects complement the action perfectly, and the voice-acting is superb, truly bringing the characters to life. The control system too is easy enough to get to grips with, however the game can be particularly unforgiving, so care is always required when making leaps. Ultimately, Sly Raccoon is by far one of the most enjoyable platformers I have had the privilege of playing recently.

- Charming lead character
- Cartoon style
- Variety
- 8 Slow-down



developer: pandemic studios [] publisher: lucasarts [] distributor: ea africa [011] 516-8300 price: R 299.00 [] genre: action shooter [] internet: www.lucasarts.com

reviewer: Michael "RedTide" James

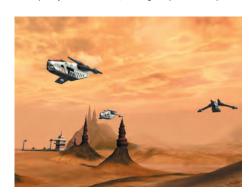
Star Wars: The Clone Wars

If you were told that, "the fate of the entire universe rested in your hands", what would you do? If you were told that, "fate, in your hands the universe rests", would you tell Master Yoda your name wasn't fate or would you ask him why your hands don't rest in the universe? You'd think the guy would have learnt how to speak English by now - 300 years old he is after all.

Clone Wars the PlayStation 2 game starts life where Episode II [the movie] ended - it's fast and frantic and drops you right into the middle of the action on Geonosis [the planet right at the end of the movie where all hell breaks loose]. The play dynamic doesn't relax the frantic pace for a single second - so it's safe to say that this is certainly no easy paced bass fishing simulation. During the game players will pilot five different assault vehicles ranging from a speeder bike to an assault walker - each of the different craft handles and reacts differently and all feature their own unique selection of weapons, the inclusion of so many different craft takes the game up a few notches as it offers players more variation than expected. The game also offers up a number of different

modes of play across the 16 missions such as escorting convoys, defending or attacking locations and threat removal. Despite the variation in both game modes and vehicles the 16 missions disappear rather quickly leaving you feeling disappointed overall. Another 8-10 missions would have been just right.

The one thing the game does get perfect is immersing the player in the situation, there is always plenty of action happening on screen and most of the time it's there purely for decoration, adding heaps of atmosphere.



Completing the package the split screen multiplayer action is also a decent form of distraction with four different game modes and rounds off this action shooter perfectly - it's cut a little short and lacks depth but if you're after pure action you won't find better.



- Plenty of Action C Looks lovely
- Faithful
- 8 Repetitive Play
- 8 Limited

console?

THE SIMS

developer: maxis | | publisher: electronic arts | | distributor: ea africa | [011] 516-8300

price: R 499.00 [] genre: people simulator [] internet: www.thesims.com

One of the PC's best selling titles of all time makes it's console debut. Yes, those strange little people in the world's most technologically advanced doll's house are making their way into the hearts and minds of a whole new bunch of consumers. But how can a title like The Sims work on a

When I first saw this I had very mixed emotions. Part of me was excited to see The Sims arrive on a new



platform, while another cringed at the thought of all the potential bugger-ups that could have been made in the title. Thankfully, there isn't too much wrong with the game. In fact, aside from the poor resolution of most televisions making things a little difficult to see in the game, it is pretty cool. But it is nothing like its computer cousin, other than in name and in subject matter. While the Sims on PC is a management title, this game is something of an adventure / puzzle game. Being successful here has less to do with micro-management,



and more to do with doing the right thing at the right time. Never the less, it is a worthy addition to the Sims line-up. As I

addition to the Sims line-up. As I said before, the graphics are a little iffy, but the controls are simple and responsive, the sound is great, and the overall feel of the game is just... well, comfortable.

Start as a loser in your Mom's house and work your way up from residence to residence. It isn't really as open ended as the PC version of the game, but then again, it is a very different title... well worth a look if you are a Sims fan, and definitely worth the time even if you are not. Not the best game I have ever seen, but it is fun, relaxing and very amusing.

- New Sims concept
- Great character creator
- Dodgy graphics

74

developer: sega [] publisher: sega [] distributor: ster kinekor [011] 445-7900 price: R 429.00 [] genre: dancing [] internet: www.scee.com

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

SPACE CHANNEL 5 PART 2

In a strange existence where the Sixties never ended and dancing is a weapon, ace reporter Ulala struts her stuff, telling the news and helping all those in trouble. Just like she did last time. And probably just like she will do next time. Sigh...

The fact that there is a sequel to Space Channel 5 proves that there are suckers amongst the consumers, and sadists amongst the developers (and a certain editor I know, but let's not go there). The first game was really horrible, and this one is just as bad.

Set in a futuristic world inspired by the Sixties, Space Channel 5 Part 2 is a game in which dancing is power. It's a kind of modernised version of Simon Says where the only way to beat your enemies is by outdoing them

on the dance floor. I suppose in an ideal world, a game like this would be fun. Sadly, though, the reality is that it is so cheesy and camp it makes one want to hurl. And it's not only the fact that the game is annoying, either.

Graphically, a lot more could have

been done with the title, especially when the zany cast of characters is considered. But the characters as they stand are stilted and overly stylised, with no facial movement or anything that might make one sit up and take notice. Add to this an utterly horrid concept, atrocious voice acting and probably the most unforgiving controls ever (not to mention a sound track that makes you want to rupture your own eardrums with a chopstick) and I am sure you would agree that being flayed alive is more fun than spending even five minutes



with this title. It is a hellish and torturous affair that has so little merit it's incredible. Your kid sister may enjoy it, but if anyone with a modicum of taste sees it coming, run like hell.



- lt works
- A very cool coaste
- 8 It works
- Make it stop!

32









STARFOX ADVENTURES

In a galaxy incredulously far away (as far as imagination is, these days), there was a Fox who's dad saved stuff, and so, the son will save stuff too. You will collect things, you will collect more things and then you will, help us all, collect even more stuff. And yet, the fun will prevail!

While not a graphical landmark in GameCube history, the vibrant and saturated colours of Starfox Adventures compliment an overall impressive cartoon style. The game features impressive fur and terrain effects that are manipulated by environmental attributes such as wind, which actually enhance the whole experience/story instead of just being eye candy. Upholding a strong graphical narrative such as Starfox Adventures would not be possible without detailed character animations and facial articulation. Thankfully, the emotions conveyed through the character models are everything needed, and more. Proper use of focal blurring and various other Hollywood techniques gives the game brilliant cinematic styling, even during combat. Bright colours and intricate scale patterns, detailed fur and impressive water reflections all help maintain a rich graphical quality that's rare in the games of today. Starfox Adventures is one of the few games to really show what the GameCube can do.

Technically the game has all the usual audio bells and whistles, though sometimes the echos in places such as caves and other enclosed environments seemed to be timed wrong, starting too early/late and ending the same

way. Besides that, no complaints here. The soundscaping was well thought out, each section of dinosaur planet having a distinct and often catchy background melody, from the tribal feel of the Hollow to the eerie, disturbing off-key notes of Moon Mountain. The voice acting is pretty much what you'd expect it to be, drawing its roots from Saturday morning cartoons and their ilk. Sadly, Starfox Adventures's story is, by industry standards, quite shallow, but the story is presented in an appealing and often jawdropping way due to the use of cinematic jewels such as amazing camera work. For those who are unclear about the origins of the mercenary group Starfox and their leader, Fox McCloud, it all started in the original Starfox for Super Nintendo, which was a top arcade-style flying game. In this title, Fox is contracted to investigate the mysterious Dinosaur Planet - although the bounds of the contract do get stretched a bit during the tale.

At it's core, the game revolves around someone telling you they need something, then you run around getting said item, returning it to whoever asked for it and in return gaining a new ability which allows you to reach areas you couldn't before where more people need things. The amount of 'errands' you have to do in the game is record-breaking. Thankfully, that core idea is packaged quite nicely with the help of smooth controls, interesting objectives and occasional breaks in the 3rd person roaming, letting you pilot the Arwing between areas (in the

traditional Starfox style), riding a massive Mammoth or participating in various races or even tests of strength and observation. Overall, the role of errand boy might get monotonous after a while, that is, until you hit the next interesting bit and get drawn into trying to find out what happens next.

Starfox Adventures is a dream to control, even across its multiple game styles such as flying, racing, combat, adventuring and various jumping puzzles. The game provides you with

descriptive help about each control method when the need arises. In adventure sections the character responds instantly and fluidly, the interface being easily accessible even while doing other things such as climbing or fighting.

Starfox Adventures might seem at first glance like a children's game, but it's far from it. Granted, some sections tend to spoon-feed you what you're supposed to do, but others just throw you into the fire and expect you to figure it out. Graphically it's colourful and appealing, the controls responsive and intelligent while the plot becomes gripping after a while. The dialogue contains both humour and drama, even a few laughout-loud moments, which suits the game perfectly. If you're a GameCube owner looking for a fulfilling adventure game done right, you can't go wrong with Starfox Adventures.





1 Player | 3 Memory Blocks

- Great voice acting
- Always something to do
- Eye candy
- R Frrand-boy play dynamic
- 8 Dodgy sound
- 8 Simple story

Summary

For some, it might become a classic. For others, a quick interlude before Legend of Zelda graces the $\mbox{\sc GameCube}.$ All in all, a deceptively juvenile package hides a fun and sometimes frustrating adventure. If money is a problem, rather save up for one of the more major titles such as Metroid Prime or Zelda, but if money is no object, pick





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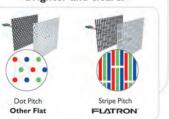
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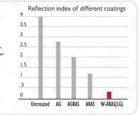
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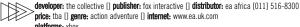
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BUFFY THE VAMPIRE

SLAYER

Life in Sunnydale may seem easy to the uninformed, but being a resident of a town on the Hell Mouth is never easy- especially when you're the Slayer. And that, dear friends, is exactly what is required from you in this latest title from Fox Interactive for the Xbox console.

For a great many years, Buffy the Vampire Slayer has achieved something of a cult following among television viewers. In fact, Joss Whedon, the creator of the series



(and the initial feature film) could never have expected the status that his brain child would achieve. Several seasons, a spin off series and merchandise galore... and now a game for the Xbox. But creating a game based on so popular a series is

quite a challenge. People know the characters, the locations and the story so well that a minor mistake within the game could create a glaring inconsistency that would enrage fans and result in a tarnished image for the title - not to mention the developers. Rest

> assured, the team behind Buffy the Vampire Slayer were on top of their game. Set in an alternate Buffy reality (a fact which is even joked about in the title) the game features all the characters you would expect - Xander, Willow, Angel, Cordelia, Giles, Drucilla and, my personal favourite. Spike - not to mention The Master. But it is a more innocent time for the characters, not much like the angst ridden later seasons of the television series. Full of fun and guips, lots of very typical Buffy-esque humour and rollicking action, it is a title that will have the fans calling for sequels.

But how does the game stand up for the non-Buffy fan? This is another area that

> developers certainly paid attention to. They managed to create a title that is fun, action packed and wonderfully exciting, not to mention well enhanced with a "can't put this down" factor. With an AI that is sneaky and devious (opponents will pick up weapons you dropped during the game and use them against you) as well as combat that is less structured and more all out



sounds familiar

You may notice, when playing this title, that a few of the voices seem familiar. That's because they are - some of the famous voices you will hear are: David Boreanaz as Angel Nicholas Brendon as Xander Charisma Carpenter as Cordelia Alyson Hannigan as Willow Anthony Stewart Head as Giles James Marsters as Spike

Sarah Michelle Geller is conspicuous in her absence, though, leaving the voice of Buffy to be played by someone else...

brawl (falling opponents may knock each other down, bits fly off of them and that kind of thing), Buffy the Vampire Slayer makes for a great third person action adventure.

Graphically the game is pretty enough, with beautifully constructed levels and wonderful character animations (although some of the physical aspects of the characters are a little questionable... Priest doesn't like the fact that Buffy's bum doesn't wiggle when she runs then again, he always likes to eyeball bums in games) the game looks very impressive. There are a few lighting problems, but these are minor in the greater scheme of

Simple controls, a simple yet enjoyable story and massive amounts of action, not to mention a few movement oriented challenges and puzzles, good graphics, great voice acting and a healthy dollop of humour - all of these things come together, powered by the impressive Xbox, to form one of the best titles available today. This is great fun... no holds barred action for all. Some may find it a little scary, but, then again, Buffy has always had a strong 'wiggins' factor.

Requirements

1 Player

- Clever Al
- Great brawling action
- @ Responsive controls
- A Lighting issues
- 8 No Sarah Michelle Geller
- 8 No bum wiggle

Summary

Fans and gamers will love this one! Welcome to Sunnydale, right on the Hell Mouth. Take control of Buffy as she battles Vampires, Demons and Undead in her home town in this action packed, swashbuckling title

This is third person adventure at its best, full of fun and excitement! Great stuff!







Break the speed limit on the super-highway

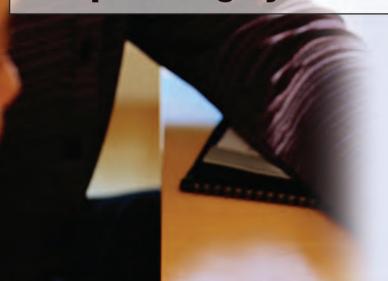
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TOP END ROUND UP

The graphics card is probably the most exciting piece of hardware inside the PC today.

No other hardware component attributes as much to your game performance as it does, although you still need a pretty decent system to squeeze every bit of juice out of the higher end cards. There are many different graphic cards available on the market, and which one you choose would primarily depend on the size of your wallet.

We are living in very exciting times. Games are getting more complex and graphically more realistic, we are seeing hardware being developed that we could not have dreamed of less than a decade ago, and graphics cards are starting to host some incredible features.

The two main contenders in the graphics card arena are ATI and NVIDIA. Both companies are producing amazing products, and which one to buy is not an easy decision. As with the Intel vs. AMD saga there will always be die hard followers of a particular manufacturer and they will swear by nothing else. I am a different breed of consumer; I make my purchase decision based on what is currently the best product on the market.

Both ATI and NVIDIA (at the time of going to print) have just released their latest cards. ATI has added onto their RADEON

range with the 9800, 9600, and 9200 series of graphics cards and NVIDIA produced the much anticipated GeForceFX 5800 Ultra. Seeing these graphics cards in action is something I look forward to, especially if what the manufacturers claim is true. With games like DOOM III and Quake IV in the pipeline we are going to need better cards than what is currently available to experience the total effect set out by the game developers.

The complexity of games in the future will rely mainly on the power of graphic cards to come. Sure, your processor, motherboard, and RAM will contribute to the performance but the GPU will carry most of the weight.



2GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor MSI 845PE Max 2 motherboard Transcend Radeon 9700 Philips 107E 17" monitor Transcend 1GHz RAM DDR333 Western Digital 80GB HDD 7200rpm LG DVD/CD-RW combo drive



gabyte GV-R9000 Pro |

3 3

THE

DMark03

3DMark03 consists of 4 game tests, these 4 tests are the only tests involved in calculating a 3DMark score. The other tests include a CPU, image quality and interestingly enough a sound

test. This new version of 3DMark also now fully supports DirectX 9 so it is no wonder that the Radeon cards, which had DirectX 9 support, produced high scores in this round-up. It is important to note though that only a small part of the benchmark requires DirectX 9 hardware. As DirectX 8 hardware is now commonly available, a major portion of the tests in 3DMark03 requires DirectX 8 hardware support. A new feature of 3DMark03 is Framebased Rendering. 3DMark now provides two different real-time rendering mechanisms: time-based rendering and frame-based rendering. Each game scene has a timeline or natural pace of action. Time-based rendering adjusts the frame-rate to maintain this timeline. Frame-based rendering forces each run to generate exactly the same number of total frames regardless of the PC used. All of the demos feature real-time rendering, this means that none of the tests are pre-recorded or are based on some video format. FutureMark has also moved away from the Max-FX 3D engine (as used in 3DMark 2002) and now incorporates a DirectX 9 based 3D engine. The real time physics engine is still provided by Havok though. The ever popular demo feature is also built into this new version of 3DMark.The 3DMark03 demo contains all four game tests; including a longer version of fighter combat scene, the demo also includes sound. The score range for 3DMark03 will initially range between 1000 and 5000. These scores will obviously increase as better graphics cards come onto the market. If you think of when 3DMark 2001 came out, the average high end score produced was 5000.

The minimum system requirements for 3DMark03 are:

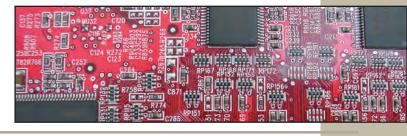
- 1GHz x86 compatible processor (PCMark2002 CPU score of over 2500)
- 512MB of RAM (512MB recommended)
- 1GB of free hard disk space
- Windows 98/SE/ME/2000/XP
- DirectX 9.0

Benchmarking

Over the last couple of weeks I had to face a very sad fact, here in South Africa we only see a quarter of the graphic cards that are available on the international market. By the time you read this article the new cards from ATI and NVIDIA might be available locally. I tried to get hold of these for this Roundup but we had so much trouble with local customs that I had to abandon all hope as my deadline approached.

For this month's HardCor3 Roundup I intended to look at only the higher end of the market, but because of the trouble I had with getting the new cards I had to substitute with some entry level cards.

The NVIDIA cards consisted of the GeForce Ti range and in the ATI arena I looked at the Radeon 9100 and up. The benchmark programs I used were 3DMark2001 SE Pro build 330, 3DMark03 Pro version 3.1.3, Aquamark V2.3, Unreal Tournament 2003, and the ever popular Quake III. All benchmarks were run with default settings. In the case of benchmarking the Anti-Aliasing, I just adjusted it to 4X and changed nothing else. Although some of the cards sport the 8X AGP specifications I did not bother obtaining an 8X AGP compatible motherboard as the performance increase over 4X AGP is roughly between 2% to 10%. The drivers I used during all benchmarks were NVIDIA' Detonator 41.09 and ATI's Catalyst 3.1. In reviewing the cards I took into consideration its software bundle, price, and most importantly its performance. In most instances, the cards with the same GPU produced very similar results. In these cases I compared the estimated retail price of the cards and the bundle it offered.



The MSI Ti 4800SE-VTD8X is the 8X AGP version of the GeForce 4 Ti 4400. As with the MSI Ti4200-VTD8X, which looks almost identical, this card features the new copper heatsink that is incorporated into the MSI graphic cards. Looking at the cooling it provides for the Ti 4800SE chipset it is easy to see that this heatsink and fan does a good job. The fan and the casing around it are translucent, and I am sure it would look even better if you strategically place a blue LED in it. The MSI Ti 4800SE-VTD8X has 128 MB DDR RAM and it runs at 550 MHz while the core clock does its job at 275 MHz.

The bundled goodies with this card are nothing less than what I expected from MSI. It features three games, Duke Nukem Manhattan Project, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, and The Elder Scrolls III Morrowind. There is also a 7-in-1 games collection featuring some demo games. On the more serious side of the computing scale are FarStone Virtual Drive 7 and RestoreIT. Virtual Drive 7 is a standard CD emulator and RestoreIT works in much the same way as Windows XP System Restore, and it allows you to create restore points to which you can revert if you have deleted files or changed certain system settings.

For video editing enthusiasts there is a copy of InterVideo WinProducer and WinCoder, as well as the InterVideo WinProducer and WinCoder Professional

users pack. For DVD playback there is InterVideo WinDVD 5.1 channel. I am a bit baffled as to why it is included, but there is also a copy of Supreme Foreign Language Learning Machine.

The MSI Ti 4800SE-VTD8X offers almost exactly the same performance as the other Ti4800SE graphic cards in this round up, I know I have said that before, but what sets this card apart is the fact that it is extremely well priced and it has more than enough bundled software to keep anybody busy.

Features 89
Performance 89
Value for money 90
Bundle 90

Overall 89

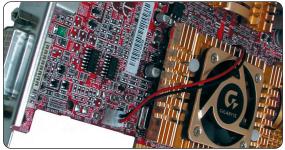
Pros: Bundle | Price | Performance Cons: Nothing Supplied by: Pinnacle Micro [011] 265-3000 ERP: R2695.00 Internet: www.msi.com.tw

The Radeon 9000 was released in two versions, the Radeon 9000 and the Radeon 9000 Pro. The difference between the two are the speeds at which the core and memory operates. The Radeon 9000 Pro runs at a core frequency of 275 MHz and its DDR memory runs at 550 MHz, as opposed to the 250 MHz and 400 MHz respectively for the Radeon 9000.

The card itself is visually stunning; it features gold heat sinks on both the GPU and the RAM chips. For some reason the RAM chips on the back of the card are not protected by any heat sinks. This Gigabyte GV-R9000 Pro II from Rectron features 128 MB DDR

RAM and has a DVI and a 15-pin D-sub port as well as a TV-out socket. Using the TV-out socket you can connect your PC to a TV or to a projector using the cables provided in the box. There is also a DVI to D-sub converter allowing you to attach a second monitor to your PC.

Bundled with this card you will find Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4, a full version of



Features 78
Performance 70
Value for money 87
Bundle 80

Overall 78

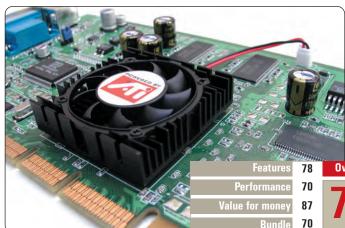
Heavy Metal F.A.K.K 2 and lite versions of 4X4 EVO and ONI. On the Driver CD is Gigabyte's V-Tuner overclocking application. V-Tuner is very similar to EasyTune-4, Gigabyte's motherboard overclocking application; it allows you to adjust the core clock and the memory clock simply by moving a slider. Performance wise this card did not perform brilliantly, although it did perform better than some of the other cards in the Quake III time demos. Keeping in mind that it is an entry level graphics card, and looking at its estimated retail price, this card offers great potential for somebody on a shoestring-budget.

Pros: Great price for a budget gamer Cons: Not for a serious gamer Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000 ERP: R1299.00 Internet: www.giga-byte.com

83

The Sapphire Radeon 9100 is not an entirely new card to the market. The Radeon 9100 GPU is basically a higher clocked version of the Radeon 8500. This 128 MB DDR RAM card falls in at the entry-level market but offers performance that should satisfy most gamers

Its operating frequency's are 250 MHz for the core clock and 400 MHz for the RAM. Being aimed at the budget and entrylevel markets, there is not



much in the way of extra software included with this card - a driver CD and Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4.

The card features nothing spectacular but will suit anyone on a tight budget. The card has a 15-pin D-Sub, Video-out, and a DVI port. A DVI to 15-pin D-Sub converter is also included. Looking at its performance this card is not much to drool over and performed much like the Gigabyte GV-R9000 Pro II. It battled guite a bit with the Ant-Aliasing benchmarks and needless to say it had a very difficult time running 3DMark03. All in all this is not a bad card, if you want something basic look no further, otherwise I would rather save up a bit and buy something that will perform much better.

Pros: Great price on a limited budget

Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: Sapphire Technologies 0861 788-346

ERP: R1199.00

Internet: www.sapphiretech.com

The Radeon 9500 is a mid ranged graphics card, it finds its place between the Radeon 9000 and the Radeon 9700. It is closer to the Radeon 9700 though and the only major difference is that it has lower GPU and memory speed. The card features 128 MB RAM running at 275 MHz and a core clock running at 550 MHz. A plus feature for this card is that it is DirectX 9 compatible. The heatsink and fan is very similar to that found on other Radeon 9500 series graphic cards. While it is normally black, in this case the heatsink is silver and the fan translucent. I itched to add a LED to the card but sadly had to restrain myself as I came to the realization that this card had to be returned.

This "no-name" Radeon 9500 which carries the "Powered by ATI" logo, features a Video-out, DVI, and 15-pin D-Sub port, all the necessary cables are also provided along with a DVI to D-sub converter to connect a second monitor to your PC. As with the Radeon 9700 series graphics card, the Radeon 9500 requires an extra power source in order to operate and a splitter cable comes packed as standard with this card. Apart from the driver CD and Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4, there is not much else to add any value to the card

The Radeon 9500 from pc-dot-com had to compete with the well known Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro. Comparing the benchmark results it is sad

to see that this card delivered a much poorer performance, this is evident when looking at both the 3DMark 2001 and 3DMark 2003 scores.



Features 79

Value for money

84 **Performance** 79

70

Pros. Price

Overall

Cons: Does not offer any extras | Performance **Supplied by:** pc-dot-com [021] 949-1246

ERP: R2675.00

Internet: www.pcdotcom.co.za

The Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro is one of the better cards in this round-up; it offers a reasonable price tag and its performance should satisfy most not-so-hardcore gamers. As with the Radeon 9700 range of cards, this one also needs some external power to function. The Radeon

9500 Pro clock speed is rated at 275 MHz while its memory also runs at 550MHz. Although it is not much of a performance booster, this card also features the AGP8X specification and is DirectX 9 compatible. The Radeon 9500 Pro is very similar to the Radeon 9700 and Radeon 9700 Pro. The only major difference is the clock and memory speeds. This makes the Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro a good buy for the gamer who wants great performance at a reasonable price. This card features a funky titanium-looking heatsink and fan. This is the same heatsink as found on the Radeon 9700 Pro version, which means that on this card you will have no heat issues. Apart from the 15-pin D-Sub port for your

monitor, there is also a video-out and DVI port. A composite video cable and a DVI to 15-pin D-Sub converter are also included

Sadly this card does not offer much with regard to bundled software. There is only a driver disk and copy of Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4.0 included. I would have loved to see at least one game included; looking at its price though this is something I can easily overlook.

At the end of the day, this card performed very well, although not as well as the Creative Radeon 9700 Pro, but more than satisfactory nonetheless. The Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro, like the other ATI cards, performed extremely well when benchmarked with Anti-Aliasing turned on. The Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro retails at a very affordable price and looking at the other cards in its price range, it offers competitive performance. Its bundle is what lets it down and sadly cannot compete with the offering from MSI.

Features 80 **Performance**

<u>Value for money</u> 87 Bundle 70 Overall

Pros: Great performance | Great price Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: Sapphire Technologies 0861 788-346 ERP: R2299.00

Internet: www.sapphiretech.com

The Leadtek Winfast A280LE TDH uses the NVIDIA GeForce 4 Ti4200 GPU, has 128 MB DDR RAM and features 8X AGP. Like its more powerful brother, this card has a huge aluminum heatsink which literally folds over to the back of the card, covering all of the RAM chips and obviously the GPU. Seeing that this card does not

require the extra cooling that the Leadtek Winfast A280TD does, it only has one fan huilt into the heatsink

An intuitive feature of this card is the built in diagnostic LED's. There are three LED's each indicating a different function or error; the green LED indicates that the card has power, the red LED indicates that there is an error, and the yellow LED will be on if the card is used on an 8X AGP compatible motherboard. Bundled with this card are 3 games and a 6 game demo disk. The full-version games bundled are Tom Clancy's Rogue Spear Black Thorn, Master Rallye, and



Aquanox. The software bundled is WinFox II, a hardware monitoring utility, Cycore Cult 3D, a 3D creating and rendering application, Ulead Cool 3D SE, and Ulead VideoStudio 6 SE. Other software includes WinFast PVR and WinFast DVD. Something I particularly like about the Leadtek cards is the WinFast PVR software. This funky piece of software adds a lot of value to the two Leadtek cards in this round-up, if you require the functionality it provides. I would even go as far as saying that if you want a card mainly for VIVO usage the Leadtek would be your best bet, as it has all the software you would need to start off with. Performance wise this card did not out perform the other Ti4200 cards in this round-up, it had to come down to bundled extras. If I were to buy a Ti4200 today

I would find it difficult to choose between this card and the MSI Ti4200-VTD8X.

Features **Performance** Value for money **Bundle**

87

Pros: Bundled software Cons: Nothing Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000 ERP: R2499.00

Internet: www.leadtek.com

The first thing you will notice about the MSI Ti4200 is the heat sink and fan. Unlike conventional heat sinks and fans the one found on this card works a little differently. Normally you will find that the heat sink is placed on the GPU and the fan in turn sits on top of that. In this case, the copper heat sink sits over the GPU and the fan, positioned next to it, blows air in from the side. The method used here is much the same as a radiator found in a motor vehicle. Although it does not offer some amazing cooling method it is still very effective. On the back of the card you will also see that most of the circuit board is covered with a heat sink which offers cooling for the memory chips as well as offering great overclocking potential. The card features 128 MB DDR RAM running at 444 MHz and a core clock of 250 MHz it also has a 15-pin D-Sub, TV-out and DVI port onboard. Apart from the 8X AGP there is technically not that much difference between this and the standard Ti4200 graphic card, although most vendors will start migrating all their products to 8X AGP. Something I have always enjoyed about any MSI product is the fact that you get some decent software bundled with its products. The MSI Ti4200-VTD8X is no different, the games bundled with this card include Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, The Elder Scrolls III Morrowind, and Duke Nukem Manhattan Project. There is also a 7-in-1 games collection featuring some demo games. Other software

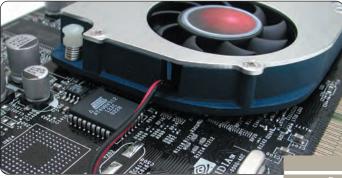
shipped with this card worth mentioning is FarStone Virtual Drive 7, a CD emulator, and RestorelT, an application that allows you to create and revert to restore points. It is similar to the restore feature found in Windows XP. This card did not perform badly in the benchmark results but, looking at its estimated retail price, the MSI Ti4800SE-VD8X seems like a much better option at only a couple hundred rand more.

90





Pros: Bundled software | Copper heatsink Cons: Only R400 less than the MSI ti4800 Supplied by: Light Edge Technology [021] 510-8270 ERP: R2280.00 Internet: www.msi.com.tw



The Ti4200 from pc-dot-com again features a no-name design. It offers 128 MB DDR RAM which runs at 550 MHz, along with a core clock of 250MHz. I was unable to get the core clock and memory speeds, due to the fact that the card is unbranded. The heatsink and fan looks almost identical to that of the

Gainward cards I tested this month. Being a GeForce Ti4200 there should be no heat issues though, unless you overclock it.

There is nothing about this card that makes it sheer value for money. On the card you will find a 15-pin D-Sub, VIVO, and a DVI port. In the box you will find a composite S-Video to RCA cable, allowing you to connect the card to your TV. There is sadly nothing along the lines of extra software and only a driver CD is provided.

On the positive side, this card performed like a true Ti 4200. Its scores are on par with its competitors and there is no major score difference in any of the benchmark results. At the end of the day I like to buy a product that can add value to my purchase, be it extra software, cables, or even the copper heatsink featured on the MSI Ti 4800SE-VTD8X. Looking at all of the above mentioned issues it is difficult to find a reason to say, "go and by this product!"

60	Features
81	Performance
75	alue for money
60	Bundle

Pros: Performance Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: pc-dot-com [021] 949-1246

ERP: R2200.00 Internet: www.pcdotcom.co.za

XFX is a brand not all that familiar in South Africa, but in some overseas countries the XFX brand of graphics cards has a good reputation for its overclocking abilities. The company has even released an easy to understand guide for overclocking your graphics card which can be downloaded from

www.xfxgraphics.com/articles/pdf/Overclocking.pdf. The card is not very attractive in itself and its blue-green circuit board might take some time to get used to. Being based on the Ti4200 graphics controller, the card operates on a clock frequency of 250 MHz, its 128 MB DDR RAM runs at 444 MHz.

The XFX Ti4200 features a DVI and 15-pin D-sub port as well as a Video-in, Videoout socket. In the box you will find a DVI to D-sub converter a Video-in, Video-out cable, and only two software titles; Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4.0 and Power Director V2.1. I would have loved to see at least one title shipped with this card, but then again, the R200 difference from the next Ti2400 in its class, would allow you to buy the game of your choice.

The performance of this card was average although it did battle a bit with the 4X Anti-Aliasing turned on in 3DMark 2001 SE. Looking at value for money this card does not scream; "buy me!" It has little to offer in the bundled department and if I was in the market for a Ti4200, I would probably look elsewhere. I also

did not test this card's overclocking abilities although I was tempted to, but even with its good reputation I would pass.



Features	75
Performance	80
Value for money	75
Bundle	60

Overall

Pros: Cheapest Ti4200 in this round-up Cons: Offers nothing exciting | Average performance Supplied by: Pinnacle Micro [011] 265-3000 ERP: R1995.00 Internet: www.xfxforce.com

The Gainward Ultra/650-8X XP uses the NVIDIA GeForce Ti4200 chipset. It features 128 MB of DDR RAM and hosts the AGP 8X standards. The core clock of this card runs at 250MHz while the Ram is set at 500MHz.

As with the Gainward Ultra/750-8X, this card offers little with regard to bundled software, the game you get with the Gainward Ultra/650 is Serious Sam: The First Encounter, a copy of InterVideo WinCinema is also included. InterVideo WinCinema is a DVD/MP3 playback application, WinProducer 3 is part of the WinCinema package and allows you to create VCDs and SVCDs, and you are also able to use this program to import footage from a camcorder or an analog source. WinProducer 3 also features basic video editing and you can create DVD-type menus and chapters for PC playback.

The card also features a 15-pin D-Sub, VIVO, and a DVI port, a DVI to 15pin D-sub converter is also included allowing you to connect a second monitor if you wish. A set of VIVO cables is also included. Looking at the card you will notice that all the Ram chips on the card are protected by heatsinks, the main heatsink is made from aluminum and did a pretty good job of keeping

It was very difficult to rate this card above the rest as it offered nothing more,

or different from its competitors. Because its performance was very much on par with the other Ti4200 graphic cards in this round-up, I had to look at what else this card had to offer. It also does not have a remarkably low estimated retail price so I had to focus on what extras it offered. Sadly the MSI Ti 4800SE-VTD8X still features the best value for money but if bundles is not what you are after, this card will satisfy the entry level market.



Features 80 **Performance** 81 80 75

Pros: Great entry level card Cons: No extras Supplied by: Axiz [011] 237-7000 ERP: R2200 00 Internet: www.gainward.com



The NVIDIA Ti4600 is one of the most popular graphic chipsets on the market and ASUS has done a good job of incorporating it into their product line. The company has stayed with the NVIDIA reference design for this card, which is a good thing for consumers as it offers the most stable performance. The ASUS V8460 has 128 MB DDR RAM running at 650 MHz and a core clock speed of 300 MHz.

This card is surprisingly heavy, thanks to its copper heat sink and fan which does a good job of keeping the card cool. The copper heat sink also allows for some decent overclocking. The ASUS V8460 package has quite a bit to offer, ASUS has packaged a set of 3D stereoscopic glasses, branded the ASUS VR 3D glasses, with this card. It works in much the same way as the Extreme 3D System reviewed by NAG a couple of months ago (page 91 in the January 2003

Gainward Ultra/750-8X AGP Golden Sample is just a very fancy name indicating that

the card is a GeForce 4 Ti 4800SE. This card has 128 MB DDR RAM which runs at

550 MHz and a core clock which runs at 275 MHz. I particularly appreciated the fact

that all the RAM chips had heatsinks on them. Although this is not really necessary

overclock the card. The overall red colouring of the card will look good in any case,

The bundled software lets this card down a bit and only includes one game, Serious

Sam: The First Encounter and InterVideo WinCinema which is a DVD/MP3 playback.

WinCinema also allows you to create and edit your own movies. WinProducer 3 is

part of the WinCinema package and allows you to create VCDs and SVCDs, you are also able to use this program to import footage from a camcorder or an analog

source. WinProducer 3 also features some basic video editing and you if you

other Ti4800SE cards in this round up. Although it comes at a much cheaper

price than the Leadtek Winfast A280TD it is still not as well priced as MSI Ti

The performance of the Gainward Ultra/750-8X AGP was much the same as the

but I must confess, I think the heatsink looks a bit dull and cheap. The card also

under normal operating conditions, it becomes a necessity when you start to

features the standard 15-pin D-Sub, a DVI port, and a VIVO port.

wish you can use it to create DVD-type menus and chapters.

issue). The card itself allows you to connect a myriad of devices; these include the VR 3D glasses a TV, digital flat panel, 2nd PC monitor and a video recorder or camcorder. The software bundled with this card is not exciting, but it should satisfy most gamers for a couple of days. The games include Aquanox and Midnight GT, there is also a Games Showcase CD featuring demos of a couple of games.

An interesting software title bundled with this card is ASUS Video Security II. This application allows users, with the help of a web cam, to detect any environmental change or monitor a specific location. When an intruder is detected it will immediately start recording the subject. You can also set it to take snapshots and send an email with a snapshot to a predefined e-mail address.

The ASUS V8460 Ultra Deluxe offers a good all round performance but unfortunately it is on the pricey side. At its estimated retail price I would much rather opt for a Radeon 9700 Pro.

Features 89
Performance 90
Value for money 70
Bundle 85

83

Overall Pros: Great for overclocking | VR 3D glasses

Cons: Price

Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000

ERP: R5099.00 Internet: www.asus.com.tw

undle 85

4800SE-VTD8X. Looking at what you get in the box, compared to the MSI graphic card and keeping in mind the price; it is not difficult to go for the one with all the extras.

Features 82
Performance 87
Value for money 80
Bundle 75

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Overall O 1

Cons: Bu Supplied ERP: R29

Pros: Great performance
Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: Axiz [011] 237-7000 **ERP:** R2999.00

Internet: www.gainward.com

Winfast Azguld MyVIVO Edition

The Leadtek Winfast A280TD is a GeForce4 Ti4800SE based graphics card with 8X AGP and 128 MB DDR RAM. The RAM runs at a frequency of 550 MHz and the clock frequency is 275 MHz. Its heat sink and fan, in fact there are two fans, must be one of the most impressive in this round-up. The heat sink is made from aluminum and is folded over the card, to cover both sides of the ensuring maximum cooling. The ports on the card include the regular 15-pin D-sub, VIVO socket and a DVI port.

This card has a lot to offer in the form of added value. The games bundled include Tom Clancy's Rogue Spear Black Thorn, Master Rallye and Aquanox. There is also a disk with 6 demo games. The software applications are quite useful, and includes WinFox II which monitors your hardware and Cycore Cult 3D, a 3D creating

heatsinks on the RAM chips.



and rendering application More popular titles include Ulead Cool 3D SE and Ulead VideoStudio 6 SE. One of the best applications I have seen bundled to date is WinFast PVR. This nifty application allows you to view and record TV or video. By connecting your TV or video machine, using the supplied cables, to the Leadtek Winfast A280TD you can make use of features such as picture in picture and time shifting (which allows you to view recorded programs while it is recording).

Performance of this card was good, albeit average for the Ti4800SE range of cards. It offers a great bundle with some quality applications and games. When looking at the benchmark scores though, it is very easy to see that some of the other manufacturers offer much the same performance at a much lower price. It is a sad fact because the Leadtek Winfast A280TD has a lot of great features and it has a good reputation in the gaming industry.

Features 89
Performance 87
Value for money 74
Bundle 87

84

Pros: Great software | Performance **Cons:** Price

Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000 **FRP:** R3699 00

ERP: R3699.00
Internet: www.leadtek.com

Sapphire has built a good reputation for itself in South Africa; it offers pretty decent cards at affordable prices. Although not as well known as some of the other brands, it is interesting to note that Sapphire have been making ATI based graphic cards for years. The card features an unusual dark brown pc-board with all the standard ports; 15-pin D-Sub, DVI, and video out. It also sports AGP 8X and full DirectX 9 compatibility. Based on the R300 graphics core, the Sapphire Radeon 9700 pro has a clock frequency of 325 MHz while its 128 MB DDR RAM runs at 620 MHz. The heatsink and fan on this card, which has a titanium-like finish, looks very stylish with the brown pcboard, it was also strange to note that there are no

In order to accommodate the high power requirements of the RAM, there is an external power adapter: the cable is also included.

On the downside, Sapphire is not known for bundling much with their graphic cards, and this is evident with the Radeon 9700 Pro. Apart from Cyberlink PowerDVD XP 4.0 and a driver disk, there are no games or useful software in the box. In their defense though, I do not blame them for not including a game or two. If I were to buy a high-end graphic card such as this one I would not want a second grade game, I would much rather prefer a new release.

Being one of the only two Radeon 9700 cards reviewed it is not difficult to guess that one of these will come out tops over all the other cards in this round-up. The Sapphire Radeon 9700 Pro offers superb performance and in the benchmarks proved that it can out perform most even with 4X Anti-Aliasing enabled. Seeing that both the Radeon 9700 Pro cards in this round-up have the same retail price it was almost impossible to choose a winner as both offered equally great performance and value. Sadly in both instances the bundle is what let the card down and prevented it from getting a 90% overall score.



Features 90
Performance 95
Value for money 90

Bundle

70

Overall R 6

Pros: Performance Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: Sapphire Technologies 0861 788-346 **ERP:** R4399 00

Internet: www.sapphiretech.com

I cannot remember when the last time was that I saw a Creative 3D Blaster graphic card. Even though Creative is not as big as they used to be they proved, with the RX9700 Pro, that they are more than capable of producing top quality products. This card features the ever popular and lightning fast Radeon 9700 Pro GPU. Running at a core clock of 325 MHz few other cards can keep up (this statement is true at time of going to print and excludes the new fare from NVIDIA and ATI). This card's gold heatsink and fan looks somewhat cheap, but do not let it fool you, it does a very good job of keeping the GPU cool. A welcome site is heatsinks on the RAM chips, both on the front and back of the card. Satisfying the power hungry RAM, there is an external power connector on the card. The Creative 3D Blaster 5 RX9700 Pro is also DirectX 9 compatible and it conforms to the AGP 8X platform. On the card you will find a 15-pin D-Sub port, a video-out, and a DVI port.

As with the Sapphire Radeon 9700 Pro, this card does not have any bundled software, except for the driver CD of course. Looking at the price of this card it is easy to see that it is not aimed at just anybody. I can tell you this though, if you have the cash, this card is well worth it. I am not sure about the estimated retail prices for the new ATI Radeon cards, but if rumours are anything to go buy they will be worth the wait. For now though, the Radeon 9700 Pro is

definitely the top performer and if you are a serious gamer with money to burn do not hesitate to get your hands on one of these.



Features Performance 95 90

90 Overall

70

Pros: Performance Cons: Bundle

Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000

ERP: R4399.00 Internet: www.creative.com





	Card name and model	3DMark 2001 SE	3DMark 2001 SE with 4XAA	3DMark 03	Aquamark Average	Aquamark with 4XAA	UT2003 Bot Match(1024x768)	UT2003 Flyby(1024x768)	Quake timedemo 1	Quake III timedemo 2	Price	Rating
	MSI Ti 4800SE- VTD8X (MS-8900)	10200	5783	1487	61.7	28.8	50.24	134.58	205.4	199.7	R2695	89%
	Gigabyte GV- R9000 Pro II	7219	2235	1065	39	11.6	44.3	74.55	200.3	196.8	R1299	78%
	Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9100	7737	2038	990	42.2	13	44.79	81.87	198.5	196.5	R1199	76%
	OEM Radeon 9500	9101	6103	2515	44.9	30.9	49.06	95.83	193.4	189.8	R2675	78%
	Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9500 Pro	10579	7814	3494	61.4	46.2	49.9	137.8	195.7	191.7	R2299	80%
	Leadtek Winfast A280LE TDH MyVIVO Edition	9866	5386	1372	59.9	26	49.59	127.92	204.1	199.3	R2499	86%
	MSI Ti4200-VTD8X (MS-8894)	9846	5338	1370	60.1	26	49.7	128.03	205.5	201.2	R2280	85%
	OEM Ti4200 8X AGP	9849	5384	1372	60.2	26.3	49.6	128.07	202.8	197.9	R2200	69%
	XFX GeForce4 Ti4200	9540	4877	1321	59.2	23.2	49.6	122.68	205.4	200.6	R1995	72%
	Gainward Ultra/650-8X XP	985	5355	1376	60.8	25.9	49.63	127.78	203.4	199.1	R2399	79%
	ASUS V8460 Ultra Deluxe GeForce 4 Ti 4600	10573	6401	1616	63.3	31.8	49.91	137.97	207.4	201.3	R5099	83%
	Gainward Ultra/750-8X AGP Golden Sample	10244	5770	1487	61.6	28.3	49.68	133.5	206.7	201.8	R2999	81%
	Leadtek Winfast A280TD MyVIVO Edition	10208	5766	1488	61.3	28.8	49.7	133.9	203.1	199.1	R3699	84%
	Sapphire Radeon 9700 Atlantis Pro	11357	9314	4245	63.7	56.2	49.94	143.84	197.4	192.2	R4399	86%
	Creative 3D Blaster 5 RX9700 Pro	11263	9639	4438	63.1	57.6	49.27	143.23	193.3	190.7	R4399	86%

GAMEBOY ADVANCE SP

Off on a flying start, I have to declare that I was a little apprehensive about the Game Boy Advance SP. To give you some very recent history, the SP is Nintendo's way of righting numerous wrongs that were plaguing the original GBA. What prompted Nintendo to make the change is hard to say, since the GBA is the fastest selling platform ever, and the most-sold to boot.

But it had its shortcomings, the biggest by far being the lack of a back-light, making the screen pretty hard to see. This was fine with the Game Boy and Game Boy Color, but with the GBA's far more vibrant LCD display, you really need some sort of light, and some found that often direct sunlight was the best.

So instead of simply dumping out a new version with a backlight - which would be a bit of a rip-off - the big N opted for an entire redesign of the unit. Compared to the original GBA, very little gives away that the SP is the exact same machine.

I won't bore you with technicalities - there are loads of articles out there, even in back issues of NAG, covering the technology inside the GBA. In a nutshell, it's quite powerful, at least as much as a 16-bit console, and it even sports some rudimentary 3D engines with 32 bit technology.

The biggest change on the SP is not the screen, though - it's the design. Folded open, the SP resembles, loosely, a Game Boy, and more closely, those cheap LCD calculators that look pricey. The SP is not cheap, though, at around R1,600 it's a good R400 more than the GBA. So what justifies the extra cash? The design itself is far

more comfortable, both for carrying and for playing on. Granted, at first most people used to the GBA will not like it, but give it an hour and you're not going to look back. The D-Pad has been made bigger, and the buttons are less raised and smoother. The only downside with the new setup is that the shoulder buttons are not as comfortable as on the GBA, due to the smaller area the buttons take up.

The speaker now takes center stage in the unit, which I prefer. It definitely delivers clearer sound than the GBA, but Nintendo decided to leave the earphone socket out and rather charge you for this - you need an add-on to plug in earphones. This is a decision I honestly don't get, but it's typical of Nintendo's often-flawed philosophy. The most obvious change, apart from the design, is the backlit screen, but it's also the most important selling point. There is no comparison to the difference it makes having those lights glow on the reflective LCD screen. There is a button to turn the lights off, but honestly, why bother? You get 10 hours worth of play out of the unit with the backlight on and 18 hours without it, and the unit needs around three hours of charging to be back to full capacity.

Charging, I say? Yes, the GBA SP comes with two Lithium Ion rechargeable batteries and an AC adapter that plugs into any two-point socket. This means you don't need to swap batteries every 10 hours, which is a nice change.

Game wise, there is nothing new. The SP is a carboncopy system of the GBA (bar a few tweaks) and it will handle all the titles that the GBA does (which includes Game Boy and Game Boy Color games). More importantly, GBA owners won't be left in the dark with new games. The SP was created purely to fix several feature problems.

In a nutshell, it's a bit of a cold shoulder to those who already have a GBA, but the SP is a much-improved model, and by far superior. I don't know what possessed them to leave out the headphone jack, though.

SP

vs. GBA

The GBA

comparison

To lay your fears at rest, you don't need the GBA SP to play new games. It's exactly the same console as the standard GBA but with cosmetic changes. But it is a nicer machine all around. On a size comparison the GBA measures in at 14x8x2.5 cm while the GBA SP is 8x8x2 cm.

To get a backlit screen for the normal GBA, you can buy a third-party add-on. I tracked down the Afterburner Backlight Kit with ease, and it will set you back \$25. Plus, you need some technical know-how to install it, as it requires soldering and wire-stripping. Lastly, use this and your warranty becomes null and void. On the SP side, if you want your unit up to spec with the GBA, you need a headphone plug add-on. Alas, no price was to be found,

and no major hardware site listed these elusive plugs.

So cost vs. cost it's a tough call. If you have the technical know-how, maybe do the add-on, especially if you simply must have your earphone jack. But if you don't own a GBA yet, or you have the cash to spare for the R1,600 the SP will set you back, why not go for the newer one? It's prettier. The SP also comes in 3 funky colours - cool silver, moody blue and smooth black.





REVIEWED BY James "Plays Alone" Francis PLUS Nice design Backlit screen Rechargeable batteries

SUPPLIED BY: Futronics [011] 315-0079 PRICE: R 1600.00 INTERNET: www.nintendo.com



CREATIVE INSPIRE 6.1 6600



Creative bring us the sweet sound of 6.1 via their new Inspire 6.1 6600 multimedia speakers.

For those of you who still have the R49 tinny speakers from hell attached to your sound card *shame*. Creative is one of leaders in PC & PS2 sound equipment, starting in the early days with the Sound Blaster sound cards all the way up until the Audigy Platinum 2 (now selling at R2599-00).

Let's have a look at some of the technical information (don't fall asleep please:). What is 6.1 you may ask? Well 6.1 adds a rear center channel, which increases the depth of your soundfield adding to the realism of the soundscape. The Inspire 6600 has 3 front speakers (left, centre, rear), 3 rear speakers (left, centre, rear) rated at 8watts RMS and a subwoofer (22 watts RMS), in other words its quite loud giving 120 watts total wattage. It also supports 6.1 on older 5.1 cards with an 5.1 -> 6.1upmix switch on the sub. Volume and bass are controlled by a remote (corded); the remote also has a headphone jack and a power LED. Be careful when you plug in the headphones, if it's not properly inserted and you pump up the volume, other people might get a touch annoyed (/me looks at the wife). 6.1 is supported in the most recent games (Hitman 2, SOF2, etc) and some DVD's (Gladiator,T2). 6.1 will become mainstream in the

very near future.

Wires, wires everywhere, I'm sorry but this is my pet hate, the day a wireless speaker system is available I'm first in the queue to get a set. Creative have supplied decent length cables for the speakers, but unless you are going to invest in speaker stands you have a lot of wiring to do and it always seems that my PC room is just too big to mount the speakers properly. So when you buy a set of these remember to plan where you are going to use them. DVD players can also do with decent sound and an extra pair of these can make a

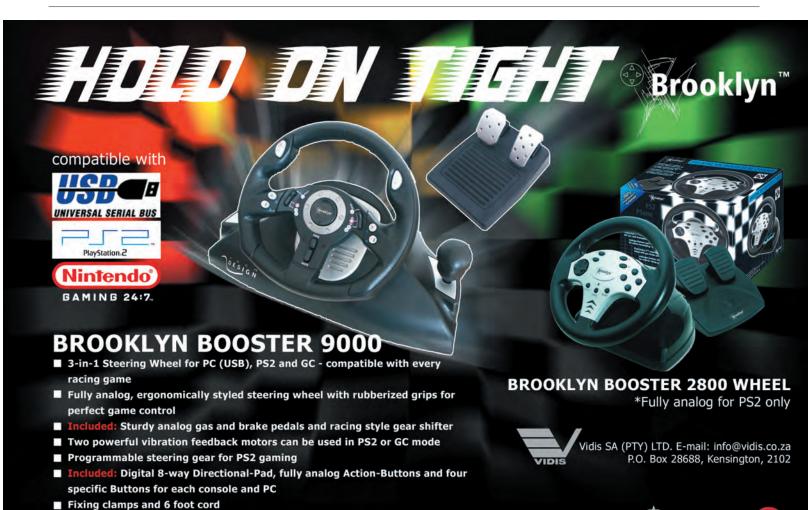
great addition to a home theatre system. The price is competitive compared to many other well known brands and the sleek black look of the Inspire 6600 range is

All in all the Inspire 6600 make a great addition for any audiophile (A person having an ardent interest in stereo or high-fidelity sound reproduction) but is not beyond the casual gamer looking for something to go with the their new Audigy 2 sound card.



6.1 sound Lots of wires Analogue Clear sound reproduction Aesthetically pleasing

SUPPLIED BY: Creative Labs SA [011] 805 0188 PRICE: B 1499 00 INTERNET: www.soundblaster.com









LOGITECH MX300 OPTICAL MOUSE



The new MX range of Logitech mice can capture 4.7 million megapixels a second bringing ultra smooth movement to optical mouse technology.

I have always been a fan of optical mice technology, but to be honest now days any ball mouse solution is just not going to cut it. Today's gamers want super accurate movement and a high sampling rate coupled with a high quality finish.

The new MX range from Logitech is the cutting edge of optical mouse technology. The MX300 is the entry level mouse from the MX range, it's also ambidextrous and has 3 buttons and a menu button (quick switch programme selector) that gives you quick access to programs currently open. 800 dpi is now the standard on all MX mice, this means that you need to move less to cover the same distance, for each 2.54cm (1 inch) you move your mouse it will travel 800 pixels on the

REVIE	WED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton		
PLUS	MINUS	
Price	Doesn't make coffee	
Looks		
Performance		

SUPPLIED BY: Logitech [011] 452-7331

PRICE: R 599.00

INTERNET: www.logitech.com

screen, and this is particularly useful for people who have 17'inch or larger screens.

I first got to play with the MX range while in Korea for the World Cyber Games, since then I couldn't wait for

them to be released locally. To be honest the only competition is from Microsoft when it comes to optical mice, but with the new MX range there is nothing to touch Logitech for now. For



Counter-Strike fans this is a must have considering the slow movement coupled with precise aiming needed in the game, even players of typical high sensitivity games like Q3 and Unreal 2003 will find the MX300 hard to heat

Drivers are top notch and the MouseWare Control Center

allows you to configure every aspect from scroll speed to button configuration. The MX 300 may be an entry level mouse according to price but its performance is superior to almost everything out there. Logitech have

> also decked the MX300 out in a matt silver with a hint of black that translates into one sexy looking pointing device. The MX300 supports USB and comes with a USB/PS2 converter for those with older machines, it also sports a 5 year warranty. This is the best optical mouse range yet and if you are on a budget or lefthanded get the

MX300, if you like extra buttons, a custom moulded fit and budget is not an issue get a MX500. There is only one name in optical mouse technology LOGITECH, stop reading and go get one NOW! And don't complain when I frag you online, the MX 300 is now my weapon of chaice.

Do da maths!



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A: RYTHMIC BEATS

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Gateway Theatre of shopping, Durban 031 - 5664722 Durban International Airport, 031 - 4081177

SOLTEK QBIC EQ3000

The SFF (small form factor) market seems to be picking up, this month Soltek have joined the fray with their QBIC range. Once again can a small design yield big results? Let's find out.

Based on the Intel 845GE chipset, which supports the latest Hyper-Threading P4 CPU's, Soltek have released 2 mini-pc models, the EQ2000 and the EQ3000. Both are finished in aluminum (mainly for heat reasons) and are less than a third the size of a normal atx solution.

The EQ3000 measures L21.5*W29.5*H23 (CM) and is what Soltek term their expansive model; it has two 5.25 and two 3.5 bays, it can also support a full length AGP graphics card (Ge-Force 4 & ATi Radeon). On the front of the case we have 2 USB, 3 Firewire, 2 SPDIFS, a headphone and mike jack ports. Memory configuration is limited to 2GB at 333 MHz, up to 100 ATA IDE support is provided and a 4X AGP slot is available for graphics cards.

Unlike Shuttle, the Soltek doesn't have a fancy heat pipe cooling device but relies instead on normal air cooling. The nice thing is that a full size fan and heatsink can be installed and the operation of this set to ultra quiet in the BIOS which keeps the noise levels down by slowing down the fan speeds to 2500RPM. Heat is not as big an issue with Intel CPU's as with AMD CPU's the fans don't need to run at 7200RPM to keep a

Intel CPU cool, therefore the sound levels are kept down to a reasonable level.

In my humble opinion Intel is a good option for SFF solutions with lower heat and dissipation levels. Don't get me wrong AMD on this type of platform is a good performer but many corporate clients are only interested in Intel.

Gaming performance was reasonable. AGP 8X port with a 133 ATA IDE support would be nice for gaming but I'm guessing this is not Soltek's focus at the moment. Would this make a reasonable LAN rig? I'm going to say yes because the pro's outweigh the con's, the board has support for the latest Intel CPU's and decent graphics cards can be used. Overclocking is possible, Soltek's BIOS is user friendly (and machine friendly), but I suggest using defaults as heat does become an issue in such a small case especially when you have used all the expansion capability available.

Small Form Factor PC's are becoming a more and more viable solution; performance has improved significantly on these platforms.

The small size in a sexy package has its attractions, people looking for a lifestyle product or something different will enjoy the QBIC. I would love one of these as a LAN case, the question is would I be prepared to spend the extra money or invest it on my existing case? Corporate customers looking to make a statement could definitely look at the solutions offered in the SFF market.





SUPPLIED BY: TVR Computers [011] 807-1390 PRICE: TBA INTERNET: www.soltekusa.com



MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

I love racing games I really do, the only problem is I have never had a racing wheel that can convince me to use anything but a keyboard. Can Mircrosoft change my mind with their SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel?

What should a good wheel do? I feel that if a wheel



successfully immerses you in a driving game then it has succeeded. I have spent too many hours trying to fine tune a joystick or steering wheel to make it viable to use in a game - the Microsoft Wheel however seemed to just work well on each game I tried.

Installation was smooth with XP picking it up as a new USB device, no drivers to install. The wheel attaches via

a clamp to your desk and then locks down so it stays in one place; on the wheel we have programmable buttons and a toggle left and right to use as a gear changer. Finished in black with red with a nice tactile feel the wheel looks the part; the pedals have a nice feel to them and respond quickly and

smoothly.

On to the driving experience. I tested the wheel with the following titles - NFS Hot Pursuit 2, RallySport Challenge and Grand Prix 4. I found that the force feedback levels varied greatly from game to game, but the wheel always responded smoothly and precisely to my inputs with a minimum amount of tweaking. My lap times were getting close to my keyboard times and I'm sure with more practise I would be able to beat those times; for once I didn't have to fight the wheel and my lap times improved rapidly.

Racing sim purists may think force feedback is just a novelty, but I really like the feedback function as the wheel feels a lot less loose and more precise than without feedback, it may not be realistic but boy is it fun!

If you are in the market for a wheel this is not a bad choice, Microsoft have always produced solid products that are a breeze to install.

REVIE	WED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton		
PLUS	MINUS	
Looks	Not much	
Performance		
Quality		

SUPPLIED BY: Microsoft [0860] 225 567

PRICE: R799.00

INTERNET: www.microsoft.com

PRO PAD

I have, in my time as a product reviewer, seen some pretty strange things, and have had to write reviews about products that would, at first, seem unreviewable - things that seemed to be so run-of-the-mill that nothing new could be said about them. But nothing so far has compared to this product when it comes down to plain old "what do I say about this" factor.

In truth, the mouse pad in general is the item that computer users take for granted the most, and product developers tend to ignore the most. After all, it is just a surface for your mouse to work on and, if you have an optical mouse and a nice smooth desk with a good surface, you may not even use one. There have been one or two attempts at new mouse pads, but none really hit the mark. That is, until now.

The Pro Pad is quite a mouse pad indeed. Sure, I can say that (not because I have to, mind you) and blindly plough forth with fabricated facts about how cool it is to use this pad... but let's get down to the very basics here. Mouse pads are manufactured products and, because of this fact, they can be improved. And this is just about the best mouse surface I have ever come across.

My first impression was "how the hell am I going to fit that on my desk?" The Pro Pad is a very large mouse pad indeed, measuring around 295mm x 415mm - larger than two standard mouse pads laid side by side (basically the size of an A3 page). When, like me, you

have limited desk space, this makes for a little bit of a rearrangement issue. However, the large size of the pad also means that you generally won't run out of pad while making big mouse movements - something that has probably had detrimental effects on every competitive gamer in the past. And while the thought of lugging a huge mouse pad around is rather nasty, the fact that the Pro Pad is only 2.5mm thick means that it can easily be rolled up and shoved into your ever handy rucksack along with your mouse and keyboard. And this won't change the pad's shape either - being rolled up is part of easy transportation, which seems to have been a rather large issue to the creator of the pad. But what of those other, ever present problems that every mouse pad encounters after some use? Curling at the edges, warping in heat... you know, the ones that leave your mouse pad bumpy and sharp edged, ready to slit your wrist when you make any sudden moves. Those, too, have been taken into consideration

Made from materials able to withstand temperatures of 250 degrees Fahrenheit (around 130 degrees Celsius) this pad can withstand being left in a car during the hottest of summer days, and won't warp as a result of excessive heat. Also, the extremely thin nature of the pad, as well as the advanced materials and bonding methods used to create the pad, prevent the edges from curling up, even after the most torturous gaming marathon.

Comprised of a closed cell foam base and an advanced

trilobal surface area, the Pro Pad is guaranteed nonslip, and provides the user with a smooth, reliable surface for the mouse to move on. It is great for both ball and optical devices, making it very versatile. At last, a mouse pad that is transportable, durable and versatile. If you take your gaming seriously, and don't think that one mouse pad is the same as another, then this is a pad you certainly need to get your hands on.



REVIEWED BY				
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius				
PLUS	MINUS			
Foldable	May cause desk-space issues			
Excellent surface				
Durable				

SUPPLIED BY: The Pro Pad [011] 455 6676 PRICE: R 100.00 INTERNET: thepropad@tiscali.co.za







WINFAST A300 TD



The WinFast A300 TD powered by NVIDIA's GeForce FX 5800 GPU uses an advanced 0.13 micron process technology for higher levels of integration and higher operating clock speeds. The GeForce FX 5800 has lightning quick memory with speeds up to 800MHz DDR2 and is the first GPU to deliver cinematic effects beyond expectations.

Powers cinematic effects beyond imagination. With advanced vertex and pixel shader capabilities, stunning and complex special effects are possible. In addition, increased horsepower delivers a faster and smoother play dynamic.

With the CineFX engine, vertex-processing capabilities are greatly expanded while programming complexity is greatly reduced, giving game developers the power to achieve any effect imaginable. Fully generalized loops and branches can be data-dependent, giving the CineFX engine a much more straightforward programming methodology than previous architectures. One shader can be written to encompass all the skinning methods and operations, and since the shader can branch on a per-vertex basis, it is not required to break up the model. With these advances, the CineFX engine shatters previous vertex shading limitations.

The NVIDIA CineFX engine raises pixel shading to a firstclass programmable citizen of the graphics pipeline, and gives developers a host of new capabilities for controlling pixels and producing effects that are only limited by the imagination.

By combining the incredible dynamic range of today's state-of-the-art 3D motion pictures with 128-bit studioprecision colour, the GeForce FX brings you the industry's best image quality for the most demanding applications.

Intellisample's intelligent gamma-adjusted antialiasing and advanced adaptive anisotropic filtering deliver silkysmooth, ultra-realistic visuals at lightning speeds. Say goodbye to the jaggies for good: your current games will benefit immediately from this state-of-the-art technology, and the games to come will positively rock your world.



The nView hardware and software technology combination delivers maximum flexibility for multidisplay options, and provides unprecedented end-user control of the desktop experience. NVIDIA GPUs are enabled to support multi-displays, but graphics cards vary. Please verify multi-display support in the graphics card before purchasing.

WinFast TwinTurbo-II Cooling System

The WinFast A300 series features a new generation active cooling system called the "WinFast Twin Turbo II". Combining Leadtek's patented technology with wind tunnel technology from aviation industry, the WinFast Twin Turbo II enables the heat sink with more effectiveness than a conventional active cooling system at the same time. Since WinFast Twin Turbo II cooling coverage will be used for both graphics chipset and graphics memory, it guarantees the function of effective heat dispersion and noiselessness to protect these two special products.

To improve the annoying noise coming from the heatpipe fansink solution, WinFast Twin Turbo II applies wind tunnel technology, which creates perfect airflow within the cooling system. Furthermore, the high-efficient Ballbearing fan sets can also provide the highest heat dispersion ability with the lowest noise. WinFast Twin Turbo II is also equipped with dual steel protection frames which can prevent the fan sets from high pressure and provide it a longer life.

Leadtek's unique WinFox Utility is specially design for users for tuning/monitoring the hardware condition of their system. Some of the functions include: Speed Runner for over-clocking the graphics core/memory speed.

Information (PCI-Watch) for system information report and many other useful functions...

SPECIFICATION

NVIDIA GeForce FX 5800 GPU

CineFX Engine Intellisample Technology High-Precision Graphics nView Multi-display Technology Digital Vibrance Control (DVC) Unified Driver Architecture (UDA) 0.13 Micron Process Technology 400MHz RAMDACs 3.2 Billion AA samples per second fill rate 160 Million vertices/sec 12.58 GB/sec memory bandwidth 800 MHz memory data rate 8 Pixels per Clock Rendering Pipeline Architected for Cg Microsoft® DirectX®9.0 Optimizations and Support New 64-phase Video Scaler OpenGL® 1.4 Optimizations and Support Video Mixing Renderer (VMR) 128 MB DDR2 Memory On-board DVI support up to 1600x1200 resolution On-board TV-out support up to 1024x768 resolution

SOFTWARE BUNDLE

Integrated Full Hardware MPEG-2 Decoder Vivid NTSC/PAL TV-out support with flicker filter

WinFastDVD WinFox II Cult 3D Coloreal Embedded Coloreal Visual Gun Metal Big Mutha Truckers





DISPLAY RESOLUTIONS SUPPORT					
Resolution	Colours (bits)	Vertical Refresh			
(Hz)					
640x480	8/16/32	240/240/240			
800x600	8/16/32	240/240/240			
1024x768	8/16/32	240/240/200			
1152x864	8/16/32	200/200/170			
1280x960	8/16/32	170/170/150			
1280x1024	8/16/32	170/170/150			
1600x900	8/16/32	150/150/120			
1600x1200	8/16/32	120/120/100			
1920x1080	8/16/32	100/100/85			
1920x1200	8/16/32	100/100/85			
1920x1440	8/16	85/85/75			
2048x1536	32	75/75/60			

Rate

UT 2K3 EDITOR CHAPTER 4: THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Welcome back to the Unreal Tournament 2003 Editor tutorial. By this time, you should have built a few playable deathmatch levels without too many problems - at least I hope you have. One of the features that makes UT2K3 so much fun is the fact that you can take to the great outdoors. And that's what we'll be looking at this time around. However, we may well not finish the outdoors aspect of the game until the next chapter. Not that terrain is very complicated - far from it - but there is a lot to cover. And I promised I would look at jump pads as well... So, off we go!

A Jump Start

Right, let's begin with the simpler option. To create a jump pad is simple, really. The hardest things to do here are searching for the right static meshes and sounds to make your jump pads perfect. Once you have selected a static mesh, all you need to do is the following: Place a UTJumpPad actor at the place where the pad is, and place a JumpSpot at the destination point. Now you need to tell the two that they "belong" to each other. Under the properties for each item is a name listed next to "Name," under the "Object" option. Take note of these names. Now open the Navigation Point option, and look for Forced Paths. Now all you do is put the JumpSpot's name under the UTJumpPad's Forced Path, and the UTJumpPad's name under the JumpSpot's Forced Path. You may have to play around with the setting for the JumpZModifier, just to get your jump velocity right experimentation is the only way here. Now all you do is add sound (as with lifts, in the previous chapter) and there you go - a functional jump pad! Easy, eh?

Tilling the Soil

definition boxes

Now, here's a tricky bit - or it appears to be. But, in fact, creating terrain is rather simple. It is just a little time consuming. However, if you cover all the steps, you can't go wrong!

To begin with, you will have to create a very large room. Let's say 4096 x 4096 x 4096. Once you have subtracted the room, make all the textures in the room a nice light colour - you will need to do this to ensure that

you can see what's going on. I chose AntBark from the **Antalus Textures**

Right. Now we have to define the area as being terrain. To do this, we need to add an actor. From the actor browser, under the Info tab, highlight the Zone Info option, and add it to your level by right clicking, as usual. Make sure that this actor is placed in the middle of your terrain room. Now open its properties and select ZoneInfo, then

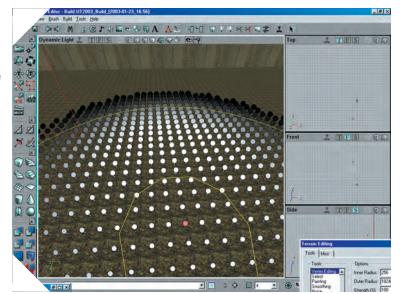
bTerrainZone and set this option to true. Then select ZoneLight, choose AmbientBrightness and set this to 180, just as a

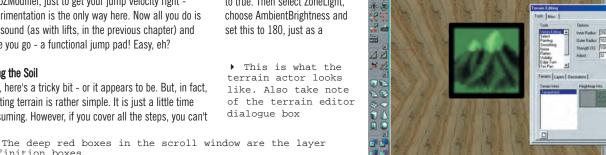
▶ This is what the terrain actor looks like. Also take note of the terrain editor dialogue box

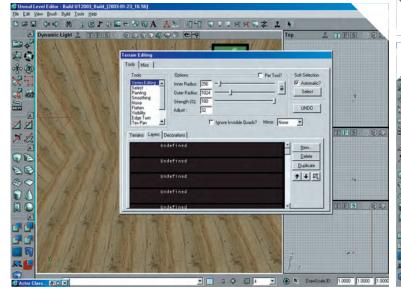
temporary visible lighting measure.

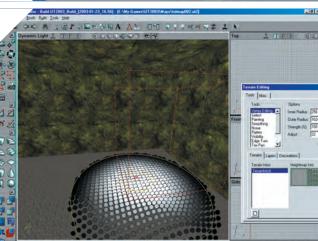
Now we have told the game where the terrain will be, it is time to actually make some.

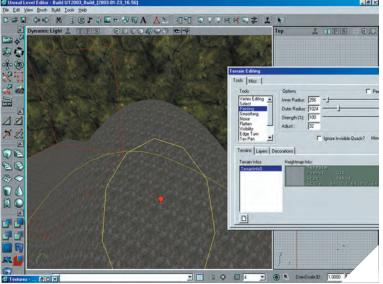
Click on the Terrain tool - you will notice that a whole new dialogue box will pop up on the screen. This terrain

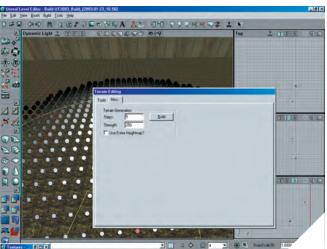


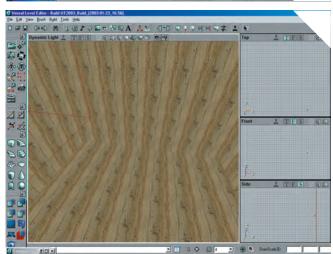












 \blacktriangle Using a lighter backdrop to work against is vital, or you won't see what's going on. All that changes next time round, though...

Dialogue Box contains everything you need to build a landscape. But the first thing to do is select the "New" button (that looks like a turning page) at the bottom left of the dialogue box. This will bring up yet another dialogue box.

The first thing to do is to set the package, group and name settings in the dialogue box. These can, quite frankly, be whatever you want them to be - I used MyLevel, Shryke and Base respectively. All that these settings do is make packaging your level easier.

Now we set the X and Y size ratios. To find the best number to put in here, divide your room dimension by 64. In other words 4096 divided by 64 is 64... so that's the number we put in there. In fact, this formula is applied whenever we need to set any X and Y values for terrain editing purposes. When you hit OK, you will notice that a new actor, which looks similar to the

terrain editor button, has appeared in the level. This actor marks the exact centre of your terrain, and should be close to the centre of your room.

However, it can be moved later. Now, find the "Layers" tab in the dialogue box, and select it. You will see several "Undefined" options under this level - each will be a deep brown red colour...

Strata

These Undefined options signify the layer of your terrain. One can be set to be rocky mountain tops, the other to be green valleys, and so on. For now, let's set the first one. Select the first undefined one (you may have to click a few times, because it is a bit finicky) and click on the new button. Set your alpha height and width to 64. Now we need to set the Alpha Fill. Under this option, R, G and B stand for Red, Green and Blue, while A stands for Alpha (which determines visibility). Set the RGB ratings to 255 each, and set A to O. Click on OK. Open your texture browser, and highlight the texture you want to use for the bulk of your terrain. Now right click on the newly defined terrain level, and select Set Texture from

Current. Now click Build All. This will insert a flat terrain layer where you placed the Terrain actor. We will discuss making more terrain layers later.

Hills and Valleys

There is an easy way to make hills and valleys and, while I am covering it in one of the boxes on this page, it is a random method. The way I describe here is a better way to get exactly what you want.

Make sure that your heightmap info is selected in the terrain dialogue box. Now, on the upper right hand side of that box you will see a list of commands. The three we are going to use are Paint, Flatten and Smooth. Select paint and you will see that your cursor (in the orthographic view) has become surrounded by two circles. These indicate the area to be affected by the painting. You can change these sizes by adjusting the inner radius and outer radius. In fact, you may want to do that anyway and, just so you know, you will definitely want to adjust your paint tool strength downwards. A lot. To around 25%. Otherwise, when you paint, your hills are instantly huge.

Right, now that you have set the tools, you create hills by CTRL+LMB and moving the mouse a little. You can create depressions (or make hills smaller) by CTRL+RMB and moving the mouse. To flatten an area you can use the flatten tool in a similar fashion (CTRL+LMB) although you must be aware that the area covered by the majority of the tool circle determines the height it will INSTANTLY flatten to. This is great for making cliff faces, by the way! If your hills are too jagged, you can use the Smooth tool (CTRL+LMB) to smooth things out a little. And that's basically it. Simple, yeah?

There is another tool you can use to create smoother hills and valleys. It is the Vertex Editing tool. When you first use it, a series of dots, ranging from white to black, appear in the active area of the terrain. The white dots are most affected areas, while the black are less affected. To move the dots, simply CTRL+LMB and move the mouse a little over the spot you want. To edit the height, use CTRL+LMB+RMB and move the mouse. Moving in different directions will have different effects.

Wow. That was quite a mouthful. And we haven't even finished terrain editing yet. However, we have run out of space, unfortunately. You can practice terrain building skills until the next issue, when we look at making your terrain look more realistic through the use of skies and varied textures, as well as another thing or two, space allowing. Until then, happy building!

terrain

Quick Cheat

On the terrain dialogue box, select the Select Tool. Now pick the Misc tab, and simply hit OK. There you go, instant terrain. But it really isn't that cool, now is it? You can fiddle the settings if you like for different effects, but a good level is designed and hand built, not randomly generated. Try keep that in mind!



Minority Report

Minority Report is Steven Spielberg's latest Sci-Fi extravaganza. Brilliant storytelling, new age special effects and a storyline as fresh and original as just baked bread. Basically the chief of the "Precrime" unit is accused of a future murder and he now has 36 hours to discover who and why he is going to murder and who is setting him up. Minority Report is a race against time kind of movie that will leave you hanging onto the edge of your seat.

Murder By Numbers

The story follows two bored high school kids who try and commit the perfect murder. They then start a cat and mouse game with the investigating detective (played by Sandra Bullock) to see if they can get away with it. The whole film is executed very poorly, and it looks more like a case for Scooby Doo than a decorated detective. The special features on the disk include, director's commentary, trailers and cast and directors highlights.

The Sum Of All Fears

To clarify, this is a Tom Clancy adapted movie, a Jack Ryan character, starring Ben Affleck and not Harrison Ford. The CIA suspects Russian scientists of developing nuclear weapons. They follow a danger-ridden trail to a shocking discovery; terrorists plan to provoke a war between the U.S and Russia. It is up to Agent Ryan to defuse the situation and save the day. The Sum Of All Fears is an action packed thrill ride, that will be well worth the money you laid out to rent/buy the movie.

Star Wars Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace

The first episode brings us to the beginning of the whole Star Wars Saga. The root of the movie is our introduction to Anakin Skywalker. We meet him as a very young boy and find out how he was introduced to the Jedi tribe and how he became a Jedi himself. The DVD is a double disk pack and the special features include, exclusive deleted scenes, an hour long documentary, music videos, theatrical trailers and TV Spots and so much more. After so many years between the original 3 films and this one, all I can say is that it is great to be back in Star Wars territory.

Star Wars Episode 2 - Attack of the Clones

Part 2 of the confirmed six part series, and part 2 of the unconfirmed 9 part series.

The story centers on Anakin Skywalker and his love for a certain woman. We see him testing the boundaries of his teachers and his power. We get a slight yet pivotal view of the inner struggles of Anakin and a hint of what will become of him. This is a 2 disk set crammed with special features including 8 deleted scenes, music videos, never before seen photo gallery, three featurettes on exploring Attack of the Clones, and much more.

Part 2 for me was a bit of a let down, not grounding itself for part 3 and not fitting into the whole feel of the movie saga, but hey it is still great and will always be part of this phenomenon.

Resident Evil

This movie is based on the hugely popular PlayStation game of the same name. A secret experiment has been taking place in the depths of a hidden lab. Something goes horribly wrong and the experiment is loose, infecting everything in its path. It is up to a renegade group of hero's to control this virus and kill off any remaining traces of the experiment. It sounds a lot easier than its going to be as how can you kill the dead when they are already dead? This is a vanilla disk so doesn't include any special features.

The Salton Sea

This is a murder Film Noir that will not appeal to all tastes. I personally had to force myself to watch to the end, not because its bad but it is not my cup of tea, or coffee or coke. The story tells that of Danny Parker, whose wife was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and ended up being murdered. Now Danny is lost without her and spends the rest of the movie moving in and out of strange situations and even stranger people. In Danny's world nothing is as it seems, especially Danny.

We Were Soldiers

On the 14th of November 1965 a regiment is dropped in the landing zone X-ray in the La Drange Valley. A place in Vietnam known as "The Valley of Death". They find themselves surrounded by 2000 North Vietnamese soldiers and the ensuing battle becomes one of the most savage in US history. Starring Mel Gibson, this war movie can proudly stand alongside the great war movies like Apocalypse Now, Saving Private Ryan and Platoon.

Men In Black II

"Here come the Men In Black" is the first song that will be racing through your mind when you watch this movie. The men are back and so are the scum. Agent K (Jones) is now a normal citizen living his life as postal worker Truro. Agent J (Smith) needs him back, as he is the only person who can stop the new breed of scum that has invaded earth. This time though the Scum takes the form of the very beautiful Serleena (Lara Flynn Boyle). The only problem is Agent K does not have his full wits about him and its up to Agent J to convince him he is part of the elite fighting group, Men In Black.

Queen of the Damned

This is another tale from vampire queen Anne Rice. For those who don't know her she penned the book Interview With The Vampire. This story still stays with the theme of vampires and we are still with the Vampire Lestat, but after many years of sleeping in his coffin, the vampire Lestat awakens only to find that the world has changed and he wants to be a part of it. He gathers a following and becomes a rock star only to find that his music awakens the ancient Queen Akasha and she wants him to become her king.

Queen of the Damned is not the greatest vampire movie out there but it is a whole lot better than most. Watch it even if it is just to see Aaliyahs last movie before she died.



















DVDs reviewed in this issue supplied by Rhythmic Beat



Bump 2 Various Artists

The Bump CDs have always proven very popular with dance music lovers. The music contained on these albums tends to be the best quality that money can buy, making the Bump series one of the top dance compilations, perfectly capable of competing with overseas releases. Mixed by local master DJ Costa, this double CD album does include some very top tracks. But it also contains some stuff that just blurs into the background. While some of the stuff on here is great, the majority of it lacks much punch... making this one of the weaker Bump releases. It's not bad, though, and will get any party pumping. (Gallo)



Does This Look Infected

Sum 41

Sum 41 are fast gaining a reputation as a top class skate punk / rock act. With Does This Look Infected they make yet another foray into this almost saturated market, but they stand above the majority of the competition because of their fine musical skills and excellent song writing talent. And talk about eclectic! There is no song on this album that sounds like any other - the music has a wonderful individuality running from song to song that is rare in most bands. This is really cool, really fun stuff for all to enjoy - as long as you like it fast and furious! (Universal)



Nothing's In Vain Youssou N'Dour

Youssou N'Dour has often been called Africa's finest musician, and while I can't agree or disagree with that statement, I must admit that he is definitely one of the finest African vocalists out there. Musically, this album contains several tracks that are a pleasant fusion between African and French styles of music, making for a beautiful cross-cultural experience, in an auditory sense. Not everyone will like an album where the lyrics are in a foreign language, but the message behind the music is unmistakable. This is a very fine collection of songs from a very fine artist indeed. Perhaps not everyone's taste, but fans will really like this one. (Gallo)



Back Into Your System

Saliva

Now here's something special! Take a healthy dose of rock, some hardcore vocal styles, and a healthy load of early Pantera influence (I'm talking Cowboys from Hell here) and you have Saliva, a brilliantly powerful band capable of producing sweet ballads and butt-kicking hard rock all in one phenomenal album. Never heard of 'em? This isn't their first album, but the biggest hit that they've had here was the collaboration of lead singer Josey Scott with Nickleback's Chad Kroeger on Hero, from the Spiderman soundtrack. This is brilliant, traditional stuff that will blast you into next week - especially if really hard rock (bordering on metal at times) is your thing. (Universal)



Gourmet De Funk

Mousse T.

It's great to have pounding beats and throbbing bass lines, isn't it? But, every now and then, you need to sit back, relax and just chill. That's when you want to have something like Mousse T's Gourmet de Funk around. Featuring various other artists, this album is a gentle and relaxed collection of fourteen relaxing tracks, masterfully put together by Mousse T. With a semi-retro aspect and relying heavily on various cultural influences, this CD is light listening at best. There isn't a party in here, but, as I said, sometimes we need to unwind. This is really very pleasant stuff - although the retro aspect may irritate some. (ASP)



200KM/H in the Wrong Lane

Tatu

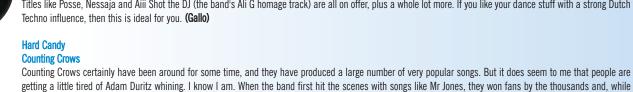
Take two really cute Russian girls with good voices, give them some great songs and top producers, sign them to one of the world's most cutting edge record labels (responsible for acts like Eminem, Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails) add a dollop of dancey beat and throw in a little alternative weirdness for spice, and you have Tatu, the latest export from behind the fallen Iron Curtain. Musically they are a strange fusion of dance music with some very left-field sentiments, making for a refreshing change to the norm. In other words, it is a breath of fresh air in a popular music market that is saturated with stale gas. Very different - very cool. (Universal)



24 Carat Gold

Scooter

Scooter have been pumping dance floors for a good long time now, which is probably the reason that 24 Carat Gold has been released. This is a collection of their most famous songs and, while you may not recognise their names, you will certainly recognise the tracks, if you frequent the dance scene or listen to much radio. Titles like Posse, Nessaja and Aiii Shot the DJ (the band's Ali G homage track) are all on offer, plus a whole lot more. If you like your dance stuff with a strong Dutch Techno influence, then this is ideal for you. (Gallo)



lacks the power of previous albums. Not bad, though... not bad at all. (Universal) $\,$

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers Soundtrack

Variou

It is very sad that, in this day and age, music has become so ethereal and short lived. A song written today will not last 'til tomorrow, as it were. But the awesomely moving sounds of classical music are still with us, and they will last forever, it seems. Sadly, the only real attempt made at any form of classical compositions these days are in the form of movie sound tracks, and some of them are truly wonderful and inspiring. This is one of them. Not everyone likes listening to score, but if you enjoy it, or have a penchant for the classical side of things, this sound track is a modern masterpiece, full of the magic that was to be found in the film. (Gallo)

those people have probably remained fans through the years, I don't think that Hard Candy will win as many followers for this band. Fans will love it, but it certainly



Feast on Scraps [DVD] Alanis Morissette

Love her or hate her, but Alanis Morissette is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the most musically important performers of our time. With three best selling albums behind her, her career has launched her to the highest heights. Now fans can enjoy Feast on Scraps, a DVD/CD combo that features 18 live tracks, as well as snippets and information. It is wonderful to see this songstress live on stage - she has an energy and vitality live that is very impressive and appealing. The CD part of the package contains 9 previously unreleased tracks from the Under Rug Swept recording sessions for fans to enjoy - and if you know Alanis, you know what to expect. This is a great addition to the collection of any Alanis Morissette fan. (Gallo)

S

HRYKE SENSES THAT PRIEST IS RATHER PEEVED, AND TRIES TO FIND OUT WHY...

Shryke: Hey dude, what's the matter. Aren't you excited about going to E3 this year?

Priest: Yup, if it was held in Istanbul. But the Americans won't give me a VISA. Something about a criminal record and potential

refugee status. O, and I'm a terrorist now.

Shryke: Yeah, I remember those forms... [Shryke becomes misty eyed for a moment] They refused me because I ticked "yes" for

the do you intend to smuggle question. Who would have known that beer and biltong were illegal to take to the States...

Priest: Of course it is. What they pass off for beer and biltong [Priest shudders at the thought of beef jerky] we feed to our

prisoners for lunch.

Shryke: We feed our prisoners? Hmmm... anyway, what are you going to do? If you can't get a visa, you can't go to E3.

Priest: Well, I managed to get one of those very large crates...

Shryke: Oh, yeah? I see. You're going to ship yourself to the USA in a crate. Or, at least, you're going to ask me to ship you the States, right?

Priest: Nope, way ahead of you there. I have the postage and everything sorted out. All you have to do is post it. I'll make it worth your while.

Shryke: Explain..

Priest: I'm addressing it for Monte Carlo, but it will naturally get lost and end up in the last place you'd look, i.e. Los Angeles. And you just claim on the lost mail insurance.

Shryke: Hmmmm. But what if it doesn't get lost? I hear Monte Carlo is pretty dull... except for when the Grand Prix happens.

Priest: Plus the women, the gambling, and I'll get to dress as James Bond. I even have the accent down - Mshh Punnyphennie. Quite good, huh?

Shryke: I still think it would be easier to get a visa. I mean, if you're going to E3 by post, we should have sent you last October already. Plus there's the comfort factor... unless your

crate is big enough for a small fridge and a generator.

Priest: Ever sat in the US consulate waiting for a VISA? They don't even play music. And you always end up sitting next to the Arab-looking guy who is twitching and clutching his

coat close to him.

Shryke: Hmmmm. That reminds me... Ahmed called. He needs more household chemicals and another ticket to New York...

Priest: Plus a PlayStation 2. Apparently you can use it to make a guided missile system.

Shryke: He loaned mine last week. Anyway, if you are going to mail yourself to E3, you had better get moving, bud. Time is short, knowing the postal service. I mailed my Christmas

cards for 2008 yesterday... hope no-one dies before they arrive.

Priest: But I need your PS2. What am I going to do to keep myself busy?

Shryke: Oh, for pity sake - here, take this GBA SP. I was supposed to review it, but you'll have to do it now. And you can use it as a reading light as well...

Priest: Where's the headphone jack?

Shryke: Shut and get in the box! Ungrateful...

Priest: Okay, alright. [Priest gets into the box] Ooo! Nachos!

Shryke: Heh heh heh... [Shryke rivets the box closed, wraps it in duct tape and changes the address to "Who it may concern, Bangladesh."]











*based on the artist's frustration over the GBA RPG Golden Sun. He still hasn't healed the tree. We took his GBA away before he could burt himself



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